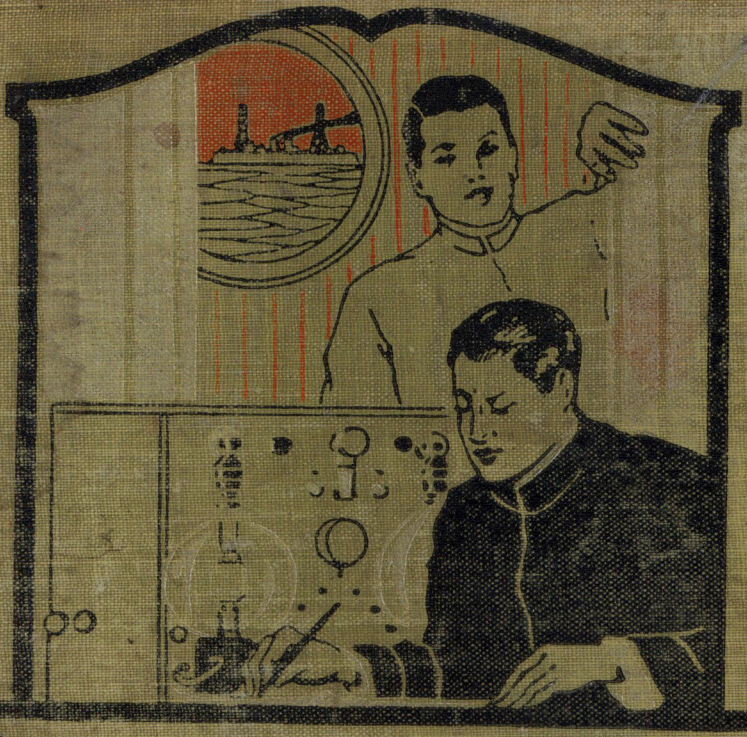

The OCEAN WIRELESS BOYS and the NAVAL CODE

CAPT. WILBUR LAWTON

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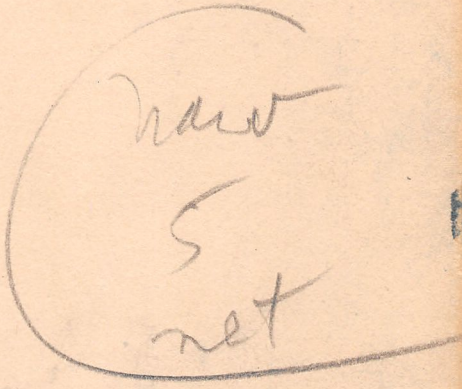

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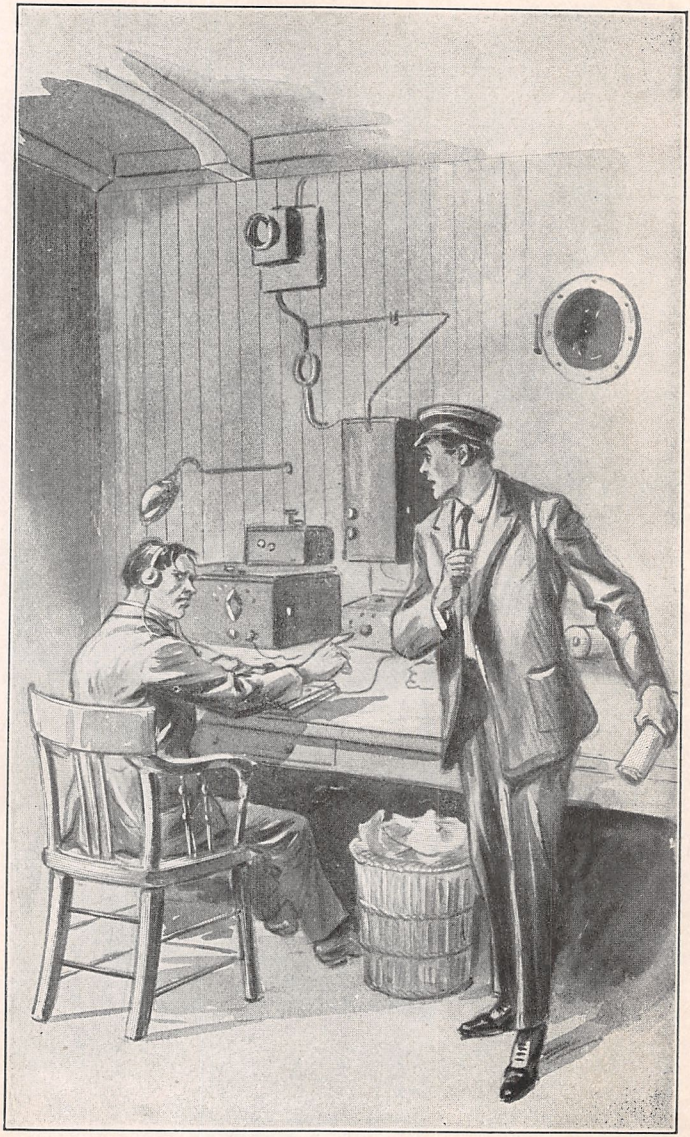

"Huh, I don't think the idea's worth a cent," sniffed Thurman.—*Page* 177.

THE OCEAN WIRELESS BOYS AND THE NAVAL CODE

BY

CAPTAIN WILBUR LAWTON

AUTHOR OF "THE BOY AVIATORS' SERIES," "THE DREADNOUGHT BOYS' SERIES," "THE OCEAN WIRELESS BOYS ON THE ATLANTIC," "THE OCEAN WIRELESS BOYS AND THE LOST LINER," "THE OCEAN WIRELESS BOYS OF THE ICE-BERG PATROL," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHARLES L. WRENN

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The Ocean Wireless Boys and the Naval Code.

CHAPTER I.

VACATION DAYS.

"Up with your helm there, Noddy! Luff her up or you'll have the *Curlew* on the rocks!"

"That's right, luff!" cried Billy Raynor, adding his voice to Jack Ready's command.

"That's what I *luff* to do," grinned the red-headed, former Bowery waif, Noddy Nipper, as, with a dexterous motion, he jerked over the tiller of the fine, speedy sloop in which the boys were enjoying a sail on Alexandria Bay, above the Thousand Islands.

The mainsail and jib shivered, and the *Curlew* spun round like a top just as it seemed inevitable

that she must end her career on some jagged rocks that had suddenly loomed up ahead.

"Neatly done, Noddy," applauded Jack. "We'll forgive you even that awful pun for that skillful bit of boat-handling."

The freckled lad grinned in appreciation of the compliment paid him by the Wireless Boy.

"Much obliged," he said. "Of course I haven't got sailing down as fine as you yet. How far do you reckon we are from home?"

"From the Pine Island hotel, you mean?" rejoined Billy Raynor. "Oh, not more than ten miles."

"Just about that," chimed in Jack. "If this wind holds we'll be home in time for supper."

"Supper!" exclaimed Bill; "I could eat an octogenarian doughnut, I'm so hungry."

A groan came from Noddy. Although the Bowery lad had polished up on his grammar and vocabulary considerably since Jack Ready first encountered him as second cook on the seal-

poaching schooner *Polly Ann,* Captain "Terror" Carson commanding, still, a word like "Octogenarian" stumped him, as the saying is.

"What's an octo-octo—what-you-may-call-'um doughnut, anyhow?" he demanded, for Noddy always liked to acquire a new word, and not infrequently astonished his friends by coming out with a "whopper" culled out of the dictionary. "Is it a doughnut with legs on it?"

Jack and Billy broke into a roar of laughter.

"A doughnut with legs on?" sputtered Billy. "Whatever put that idea into your head, Noddy?"

"Well, don't octo-octo-thing-a-my-jigs have legs?" inquired Noddy.

"Oh, you mean octopuses," cried Jack, with another laugh. "Billy meant an eighty-year-old doughnut."

"I'll look it up when we get back," remarked Noddy gravely; "it's a good word."

"Say, fellows, we are sure having a fine time

out of this holiday," remarked Billy presently, after an interval of silence.

"Yes, but just the same I shan't be sorry when Mr. Juke's new liner is completed and we can go to sea again," said Jack, "but after our experiences up north, among the ice, I think we had a holiday coming to us."

"That we did," agreed Noddy. "Some difference between skimming around here in a fine yacht and being cast away on that wretched island with nothing to eat and not much prospect of getting any."

"Yes, but if it hadn't been for that experience, and the ancient treasure we found, we couldn't have taken such a jolly vacation," argued Jack. "It's made Uncle Toby a rich man and put all of us on Easy Street."

"Yes, it was certainly worth all the hardships we went through," agreed Noddy.

"I guess we are in for a long spell of quiet now, though," remarked Jack, after a pause, dur-

ing which each boy thought of their recent adventures.

"Not so sure of that," replied Noddy. "You're the sort of fellow, judging from what you've told us, who is always tumbling up against something exciting."

"Yes, I feel it in my bones that we are not destined to lead an absolutely uneventful time ——" began Billy Raynor. "I—hold hard there, Noddy; watch yourself. Here comes another yacht bearing down on us!"

Jack and Billy leaped to their feet, steadying themselves by clutching a stay. Billy was right. Another yacht, a good deal larger than their own, was heading straight for them.

"Hi! put your helm over! We've got the right of way!" shouted Jack, cupping his hands.

"Look out where you're going!" cried Billy.

But whoever was steering the other yacht made no motion to carry out the suggestions. In-

stead, under a press of canvas, she kept directly on her course.

"She'll run us down," cried Noddy. "What'll I do, Jack?"

"Throw her over to port lively now," sang out Jack Ready. "Hurry up or we'll have a bad smash-up!"

He leaped toward the stern to Noddy's assistance, while Billy Raynor, the young engineer, did the same.

In former volumes of this series the previous adventures of the lads have been described. In the first book, devoted to their doings and to describing the fascinating workings of sea-wireless aboard ocean-going craft, which was called "The Ocean Wireless Boys on the Atlantic," we learned how Jack became a prime favorite with the irascible Jacob Jukes, head of the great Transatlantic and Pacific shipping combine. Jack's daring rescue of Millionaire Jukes' little girl resulted in the lad's obtaining the position

of wireless man on board a fine ship, after he had looked for such a job for months in vain. But because Jack would not become the well-paid companion of Mr. Jukes' son Tom, a rather sickly youth, the millionaire became angry with the young wireless man. However, Jack was able, subsequently, to rescue Mr. Jukes from a drifting boat after the magnate's yacht had burned in mid-ocean and, following that, to reunite the almost frantic millionaire with his missing son.

Other exciting incidents were described, and Jack gained rapidly in his chosen profession, as did his chum, Billy Raynor, who was third assistant engineer of the big vessel. The next volume, which was called "The Ocean Wireless Boys and the Lost Liner," told of the loss of the splendid ship "Tropic Queen," on a volcanic island after she had become disabled and had drifted helplessly for days. By wireless Jack managed to secure aid from U. S. vessels, and it came in the nick of time, for the island was

destroyed by an eruption just after the last of the rescued passengers had been taken off. Wireless, too, secured, as described in that book, the capture of a criminal much wanted by the government.

The third volume related more of Jack's doings and was called "The Ocean Wireless Boys of the Ice-berg Patrol." This book told how Jack, while serving aboard one of the revenue cutters that send out wireless warnings of icebergs to transatlantic liners, fell into the hands of a band of seal poachers. Things looked black for the lad for a time, but he found two good friends among the rough crew in the persons of Noddy Nipper and Pompey, an eccentric old colored cook, full of superstitions about ghosts. The *Polly Ann,* as the schooner was called, was wrecked and Jack and his two friends cast away on a lonesome spot of land called Skull Island. They were rescued from this place by Jack's eccentric, wooden-legged Uncle, Captain Toby

Ready, who, when at home, lived on a stranded wooden schooner where he made patent medicines out of herbs for sailors. Captain Toby had got wind of an ancient treasure hidden by a forgotten race on an Arctic island. After the strange reunion they all sailed north. But an unscrupulous financier (also on a hunt for the treasure) found a way to steal their schooner and left them destitute. For a time it appeared that they would leave their bones in the bleak northland. But the skillful resource and pluck of Jack and Noddy won the day. We now find them enjoying a holiday, with Captain Toby as host, at a fashionable hotel among the beautiful Thousand Islands. Having made this necessary digression, let us again turn our attention to the situation which had suddenly confronted the happy three, and which appeared to be fraught with imminent danger.

Like their own craft, the other boat carried a single mast and was sloop-rigged. But the boat

was larger in every respect than the *Curlew*. She carried a great spread of snowy canvas and heeled over under its press till the white water raced along her gunwale.

As she drew nearer the boys saw that there were two occupants on board her. One was a tall, well-dressed lad in yachting clothes, whose face, rather handsome otherwise, was marred by a supercilious sneer, as if he considered himself a great deal better than anyone else. The other was a somewhat elderly man whose hair appeared to be tinged with gray. His features were coarse, but he resembled the lad with him enough to make it certain he was his father.

"Sheer off there," roared Jack at the top of his lungs, to the occupants of the other boat; "do you want to run us down?"

"Get out of the way then," cried the boy.

"Yes, sheer off yourselves, whipper-snappers!" came from the man.

"We've got the right of way!" cried Jack.

"Go chase yourselves," yelled Noddy, reverting in this moment of excitement, as was his habit at such times, to his almost forgotten slang.

"Keep her on her course, Donald; never mind those young jack-a-napes," said the man in the other sloop, addressing the boy, who was steering.

"All right, pop," was the reply; "they'll get the worst of the smash if they don't clear out."

"Gracious, they really mean to run us down," cried Jack, in a voice of alarm. "Better sheer off, Noddy, though I hate to do it."

"By jinks, do you see who they are?" cried Bill Raynor, who had been studying the pair in the other boat, which was now only a few yards off. "It's that millionaire Hiram Judson and his son Donald, the boy you had the run in with at the hotel the other day."

But Jack made no reply. The two boats were now almost bowsprit to bowsprit. As for Noddy, the freckles stood out on his pale, frightened face like spots on the sun.

CHAPTER II.

"SPEEDAWAY" VS. "CURLEW."

But at the critical moment the lad at the helm of the other craft, which bore the name *Speedaway,* appeared to lose his nerve. He sheered off and merely grazed the *Curlew's* side, scraping off a lot of paint.

"Hi, there! What do you mean by doing such a thing?" demanded Jack, directly the danger of a head-on collision was seen to have been averted.

The other lad broke into a laugh. It was echoed by the man with him, whom he had addressed as "pop."

"Just thought I'd see how much you fellows knew about handling a boat," he sneered. "It's just as I thought, you're a bunch of scare-cats. You needn't have been afraid that I couldn't keep the *Speedaway* out of danger."

"You risked the lives of us all by running so close," cried Billy indignantly.

"Never attempt such a thing again," said Jack angrily, "or——"

"Or what, my nervous young friend?" taunted the elderly man.

"Yes," said the lad, with an unpleasant grin, "what will you do?"

"I shall feel sorely tempted to come on board your boat and give you the same sort of a thrashing I gave you the other day when I found you tormenting that poor dog," said Jack, referring to the incident Billy Raynor had already hinted at when he first recognized the occupants of the *Speedaway*.

"You'll never set foot on my boat," cried Donald Judson, with what he meant to be dangerous emphasis; but his face had suddenly become very pale. "You think you got the best of me the other day, but I'll fix you yet."

The two craft were out of earshot almost by

this time, and none of the three lads on the *Curlew* thought it worth while to answer Donald Judson. The millionaire and his son occupied an island not far from the Pine Island Hotel. A few days before the incident we have just recorded, Jack, who hated cruelty in any form, had found Donald Judson, who often visited the hotel to display his extensive assortment of clothes, amusing himself by torturing a dog. When Jack told him to stop it the millionaire's son started to fight, and Jack, finding a quarrel forced upon him, ended it in the quickest way—by knocking the boy flat.

Donald slunk off, swearing to be revenged. But Jack had only laughed at him and advised him to forget the incident except as a lesson in kindness to animals. It appeared, however, that, far from forgetting his humiliation, Donald Judson was determined to avenge it even at the risk of placing his own life in danger.

"I wonder if he followed us up to-day on pur-

pose to try to ram us or force us on a sandbar?" mused Noddy, as they sailed on.

"Looks like it," said Billy.

"I believe he is actually sore enough to sink our boat if he could, even if he damaged his own in doing it," said Jack.

"To my mind his father is as bad he is," said Noddy; "he made no attempt to stop him. If I—— Look, they've put their boat about and are following us."

"There's no doubt that they are," said Jack, after a moment's scrutiny of the latest maneuver of the *Speedaway*. The Judsons' boat, which was larger, and carried more sail and was consequently faster than the *Curlew*, gained rapidly on the boys. Soon she was within hailing distance.

"What are you following us for? Want to have another collision?" cried Jack.

"Do you own the water hereabouts?" asked Donald. "I didn't know I was following you."

"We've a right to sail where we please," shouted Judson.

"Yes, if you don't imperil other folks' boats," agreed Jack. "If you've got any scheme in mind to injure us I'd advise you to forget it," he added.

"Huh! What scheme would I have in mind? Think I'd bother with insignificant chaps like you and your little toy boat?"

"You keep out of our way," added the man.

"Yes, just do that little thing if you know what's healthy for you," chimed in Donald Judson.

His insulting tone aroused Jack's ire.

"It'll be the worse for you if you try any of your tricks," he roared.

"What tricks would I have, Ready?" demanded the other.

"Some trick that may turn out badly for you!"

"I guess I don't need you to tell me what I will or what I won't do."

"All right, only keep clear of us. That's fair

warning. You'll get the worst of it if you don't."

"So, young man, you are going to play the part of bully, are you?" shouted Donald's father. "That fits in with what I've heard of you from him. You've been prying around our boat for several days. I don't like it."

"Well, keep away from us," cried Billy.

"Yes, your room's a lot better than your company," sputtered Noddy. "We don't care if you never come back."

"Really, what nice language," sneered Donald. "I congratulate you on your gentlemanly friend, Ready. He——"

"Look out there," warned Jack, for Noddy, in his indignation, had sprung to his feet, entirely forgetting the tiller. The *Curlew* broached to and heeled over, losing "way." The *Speedaway* came swiftly on. In an instant there was a ripping, tearing sound and a concerted shout of dismay from the boys as the sharp bow of Jud-

son's larger, heavier craft cut deep into the *Curlew's* quarter.

"Now you've done it!" cried Billy Raynor.

"I—er—it was an accident," cried Donald, as the two boats swung apart, and there was some justification for this plea, as the *Speedaway* was also damaged, though not badly.

"It was no accident," cried Jack, but he said no more just then. He was too busy examining the rent in the *Curlew's* side.

Still shivering, like a wounded creature, from the shock of the impact, the *Curlew,* with the water pouring into the jagged rip in her side, began slowly to sink!

CHAPTER III.

CAPTAIN SIMMS OF THE "THESPIS."

Silence, except for the inrush of water into the damaged side of the *Curlew,* followed the collision. The three lads on the sinking craft gazed helplessly at each other for a few seconds.

"Get away as quick as you can," whispered Donald's father to the boy who had wrought the damage, and now looked rather scared. The *Speedaway* swung out and her big mainsail began to fill.

"We are going to the bottom," choked out Billy, the first of the party to recover the use of his vocal organs.

"I'm afraid there's no doubt of that," said Jack. "Donald Judson," he shouted, raising his voice and throwing it across the appreciable dis-

tance that now separated the two craft, "you'll pay for this."

"It was an accident, I tell you," yelled back the other lad, but in a rather shaky voice.

"You'll do no good by abusing us," chimed in his father.

"What'll we do, Jack?" demanded Noddy, tugging at Jack's sleeve.

"Steer for the shore. There's just a chance we can make it, or at least shallow water," was the reply.

"Doesn't look much as if we could make it," said Billy dubiously, shaking his head and regarding the big leak ruefully, "but I suppose we can try."

The wounded *Curlew* began to struggle along with a motion very unlike her usual swift, smooth glide. She staggered and reeled heavily.

"Put her on the other tack," said Jack. Noddy followed his orders with the result that the *Curlew* heeled over on the side opposite to that which

had been injured, and thus raised her wound above the water line. Billy began bailing frantically, with a bucket, at the water that had already come in.

"Shall we help you?" cried Donald.

"No, we don't want your help," answered Jack shortly. "We'll thresh all this out in court later on," he added.

"I'm a witness that it was an accident," shouted the elder Judson.

"You'll have a swell time proving I ran you down on purpose," added his son.

Seeing that it was useless to prolong such a fruitless argument at long distance, Jack refrained from making a reply. Besides, the *Curlew* required his entire attention now. He took the tiller himself and kept the injured craft inclined at such an angle that but little water entered the hole the *Speedaway's* sharp bow had punched in her.

The shore, on which were a few small houses

and a wharf hidden among trees and rocks, appeared to be a long distance off. But the *Curlew* staggered gamely onward with Jack anticipating every puff of wind skillfully.

"I believe that we'll make it, after all," said Billy hopefully, as the water-logged craft was urged forward.

"I wish that Donald, with his sissy-boy clothes, was ashore when we land," grumbled Noddy. "I'd give him what-for. I have not forgotten how to handle my dukes, and as for his old octo-octo——"

"Octogenarian," chuckled Raynor.

"Octogenarian of a father,—I knew I'd get a chance to use that word——" said Noddy triumphantly; "he's worse than his son. They're a fine pair,—I don't think."

"Well, abusing them will do no good," said Jack. "We'll have to see what other steps can be taken. I'm afraid, though, that they were right; we'll have a hard time proving that it was not an

accident, especially as Noddy had dropped our tiller."

"Well, I just couldn't——" began Noddy, rather shamefacedly, when there came a mighty bump and the *Curlew* came to a standstill.

"Now what?" cried Raynor.

"We've run on a shoal, fellows," declared Jack. "This cruise is over for a time."

"Well, anyhow, we can't sink now," said Noddy philosophically, "but although the *Curlew's* stuck on the shoal I'm not stuck on the situation."

"Better quit that stuff," ordered Jack, "and help Billy lower the mainsail and jib. They are no good to us now. In fact a puff of wind might send us bowling over."

His advice was soon carried out and the *Curlew* lay under a bare pole on the muddy shoal. The boys began to express their disgust at their predicament. They had no tender, and would

have to stay there till help came because of their lack of a small boat.

"Better set up some sort of a signal to attract the attention of those folks on shore," suggested Billy.

"That's a good idea," agreed Jack, "but hullo! Look yonder, there's a motor boat coming out from the shore. Let's hail that."

"Hullo, there! Motor boat ahoy!" they all began to yell at the top of their lungs.

But they might have saved their voices, for the motor boat swung about in a channel that existed among the shoals and began making straight for them. Its single occupant waved an encouraging hand as he drew closer.

"In trouble, eh?" he hailed; "well, maybe I can get you off. I saw that other boat run you down. It was a rascally bit of business."

"Gracious!" cried Jack suddenly, as the motor boat drew closer and they saw its occupant was a bronzed, middle-aged man with a pleasant face;

"it's Captain Simms of the revenue cutter *Thespis!* What in the world is he doing up here?"

"If it isn't Jack Ready!" came in hearty tones from the other, almost simultaneously.

CHAPTER IV.

ON SECRET SERVICE.

There was no question about it. Astonishing as it appeared, the bluff, sunburned man in the motor boat which was winding its way toward the *Curlew,* in serpentine fashion, among the tortuous channels, was Captain Simms, the commander of the revenue cutter on which Jack Ready had served as "ice-patrol" operator. The greetings between his late commander and himself were, as might be imagined, cordial, but, owing to the circumstances under which they were exchanged, somewhat hurried.

"So you've been in a smash-up," cried the captain, as he reduced speed on nearing the stern of the *Curlew,* which was still afloat. "Nobody hurt, I hope?"

"Except the boat," smiled Jack with grim humor.

"So I see. A nasty hole," was the captain's comment. "Lucky that I happen to be camping ashore or you might have stayed out here for some time. Rivermen hereabouts aren't overobliging, unless they see big money in it for their services."

"We'd have been content to pay a good salvage to get off here," Jack assured him.

"Well, that other craft certainly sheered off in short order after she hit you," was Captain Simms' comment, as he shut off power and came in under the *Curlew's* stern, which projected, as has been said, over fairly deep water, only the bow being in the mud.

"Then you can tell who was to blame?" asked Billy eagerly.

"I certainly can and will, if I am called upon to do so."

"Thank you," said Jack. "I mean to make them

settle for the damage, even if I have to go to court to do it."

"That's right. It was a bad bit of business. She followed you right up. I'd be willing to swear to that in any tribunal in the land. I hope you bring them to justice. Who were the rascals?"

"A millionaire named Judson, who owns an island near here, and his son, who is a fearful snob."

The boys saw a look of surprise flit across the naval officer's face. But it was gone in an instant.

"Surely not Hiram Judson?" he demanded.

"The same man," replied Jack. "Why, do you know him, sir?"

"I—er—that is, I think we had better change the subject," said Captain Simms with odd hesitation. Jack saw that there was something behind the sea officer's hesitancy, but of course he did not ask any more questions.

"I can give you a tow to the shore where there is a man who makes a business of repairing boats," volunteered Captain Simms. "But will your craft keep afloat that long?"

"I think so," said Jack. "We can all sit on one side and so raise the leak above water. But can you pull us off?"

"We shall soon see that," was the rejoinder. "It looks as if it would be an easy task. Throw me a line and I'll make it fast to my stern bitts."

This was soon done, and then the little launch set to work with might and main to tug off the injured yacht.

"Hurray, she's moving!" cried Billy presently.

This was followed by a joyous shout from all the boys.

"She's off!"

They moved down the channel with the boys hanging over one side in order to keep the *Curlew* heeled over at an angle that would assure safety from the leak. They landed at a rickety

old dock with a big gasoline tank perched at one end of it. Attached to it was a crudely painted sign:

"Charles Hansen, Boats Built and Repaired. All work Promptly Exicutid."

Hansen himself came toddling down the wharf. He was an old man with a rheumatic walk and a stubbly, unshaven chin stained with tobacco juice. A goodly sized "chaw" bulged in his withered cheek.

"Can you repair our boat quickly?" asked Jack, pointing to the hole.

Old Hansen shot a jet of tobacco juice in the direction of the injury.

"Bustitupconsiderable," he remarked.

"What's that?" demanded Billy. "Doesn't he talk English?" and he turned an inquiring glance at Captain Simms, who laughed.

"That's just his way of talking when he's got a mouthful of what he calls 'eatin' tobacco.' He

said, 'he is of the opinion that your boat is bust up considerable.' "

"Well, we don't need an expert to tell us that," laughed Jack.

"Doyouwantmetofixit?" inquired the eccentric old man, still running his words together in the same odd way.

"Yes," replied Jack, "can we have her by to-morrow?"

"Haveterseehowbadlyshesbusted," muttered the old man.

"He'll have to see how badly she's busted," translated Jack. "Suppose you take a look at her," he added to the boatman.

"Maybeagoodidee," agreed old Hansen, and he scrambled down into the boat.

"I'llfixherbyto-morrow," he said at last.

The charges, it appeared, would not be more than ten or twelve dollars, which the boys thought reasonable.

"Especially as they won't come out of our pockets," commented Billy.

"Not if I can help it," promised Jack decisively.

"And now," said Captain Simms, "as I happen to have some business at the Pine Island Hotel, I'll run you down there in the *Skipjack,* as I call my boat."

"That's awfully good of you," said Jack gratefully. "I began to think that we would have to stay ashore here all night."

Before many minutes had passed they were off, leaving old Hansen, with working jaws, examining the hole in the *Curlew's* side. The *Skipjack* proved speedy and they made the run back to the hotel in good time, arriving there before sundown. Captain Toby had met Captain Simms after the latter had found the treasure party at the spot where they had unearthed the rich trove. But he proved equally reticent as to the object of his presence at Alexandria as he had been

with the boys. He was doing some "special work" for the government, was all that Captain Toby could ascertain.

"There's considerable mystery to all this," said Captain Toby to the boys after Captain Simms had left them to write some letters which, he said, he wished to send ashore by the hotel motor boat that evening.

"It's some sort of secret work for Uncle Sam, I guess," hazarded Jack, "but what it is I've no idea. Anyhow it's none of our business."

The boys little guessed, when Jack made that remark, how very much their business Captain Simms' secret mission was to become in the near future.

CHAPTER V.

NIGHT SIGNALS.

After supper Captain Simms suddenly announced that he wished to make a trip to the mainland to the town of Clayton. He wished to send an important telegram to Washington, he explained.

"How are you going?" asked Jack. "The hotel boat has stopped running for the day."

"I know that, but I'll go on the *Skipjack*. You lads want to come?"

"Do we? I should say we do."

"You lads must be full of springs from the way you're always jumping about," remarked Uncle Toby, with a smile, "but I suppose it's boy nature."

The run to the shore was made quickly. It seemed almost no time at all before they made

out the string of lights that marked the pier and the radiance of the brilliantly lit hotel behind them. But as they were landing an unforeseen accident occurred. Mistaking his distance in the darkness, the captain neglected to shut off power soon enough, and the nose of the *Skipjack* bumped into the pier with great force. At the same time a splintering of wood was heard.

"Gracious, another wreck," exclaimed Jack.

"Wow! What a bump!" cried Noddy.

"Is it a bad smash?" asked Billy anxiously.

The captain was bending over the broken prow of the boat examining it by the white lantern.

"Bad enough to keep us here all night, I'm afraid," he said. "Do you boys mind? It looks to me as if it could soon be repaired in the morning, and the boat will be safe here to-night at any rate."

"It's too bad," exclaimed Jack. "We seem to be regular hoodoos on a boat."

"It was my own fault," said the captain, "but

the lights on the pier dazzled me so that I miscalculated my distance."

"Well, it's a good thing no other harm was done," was Billy's comment.

The boat was tied up and the watchman on the dock given some money to keep an eye on it. They engaged rooms at the hotel, and while Captain Simms composed his telegram, the boys took a stroll about the grounds of the hostelry, which sloped down to the bay. They had about passed beyond the radiance of the lights of the hotel when Jack suddenly drew his companions' attention to a figure that was stealing through the darkness hugging a grove of trees. There was something indescribably furtive in the way the man crept along, half crouched and glanced behind him from time to time.

"A burglar?" questioned Billy.

"Some sort of crook I'll bet," exclaimed Noddy.

"He's up to some mischief or I'm much mis-

taken," said Jack, as he drew his companions back further into a patch of black shadow cast by some ornamental shrubs.

"Let's trail him and see what he's up to," said Noddy.

"Gracious, you're a regular Sherlock Holmes at the drop of the hat," laughed Billy. "What do you think, Jack?"

"I don't know. He's going toward the wharf and I don't see just what he could steal there."

"Look at him stop and glance all around him as if he was afraid of being followed," whispered Billy.

"That doesn't look like an honest man's action, certainly," agreed Jack. "Come on, boys; we'll see what's in the wind. Do you know, somehow I've got an idea that we've seen that fellow somewhere before."

"What gives you that impression?" asked Billy.

"I can't say—it's just a feeling I've got. An instinct I guess you might call it."

The three boys moved forward as stealthily as did the man whose actions had aroused their suspicions. Presently they saw him cut across a small patch of lawn and strike into a narrow path which led among some trees.

With every care to avoid making any noise, the three boys followed. The path led to the edge of a cliff, down the face of which a flight of stone steps ran down to the water's edge. The man descended these.

"What can he be? A smuggler," suggested Billy.

"I don't see any boat down there, if he is," rejoined Jack in low tones.

Suddenly a sharp, low exclamation came from Noddy, who had been looking out over the lake.

He caught Jack's arm and pointed.

"Look, boys, a yacht!" he breathed.

"Heading in this way, too," rejoined Jack. "It looks like—but no, it cannot be."

"Cannot be what?" asked Billy, caught by something in his companion's voice.

"Cannot be the *Speedaway.*"

"Judson's craft, the one that ran us down? Nonsense, you've got Judson on the brain, Jack."

"Have I? Well, it's an odd coincidence, then, that the yacht yonder has a tear in her foresail exactly where our bowsprit tore the *Speedaway's* jib this afternoon."

"By hookey, you're right, Jack!" cried Noddy. "There may be more to this than we think."

Billy was peering from behind a bush over the edge of the cliff, which was not very high.

He could see below, the dark figure of a man making a black patch in the gloom upon the white beach. He was moving about and pacing nervously to and fro on the shingle as if awaiting something or somebody.

Suddenly he made a swift move.

"He's waving his handkerchief," whispered Billy to the others, as he saw the man make a signal with a square of white linen.

"To that yacht, I'll bet a cookie," exclaimed Noddy.

As if in answer to his words there suddenly showed, on the yacht, a red lantern, as if a scarlet eye had suddenly opened across the dark water.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE DARK.

"Something's in the wind sure enough," said Jack. "Hark, there's the plash of oars. They must be going to land here."

From below there came a man's voice.

"Right here, Judson; here's the landing place. Are you alone?"

"No, my son is with me," came the reply, "but for heaven's sake, man, not so loud."

"There's no one within half a mile of this place. I came down through the grounds and they were deserted."

"Humph, but still it's as well to be careful. One never knows what spies are about," came the reply.

The boys, nudging each other with excitement,

heard the bow of the boat scrape on the shingly beach and then came the crunch of footsteps.

"They are coming up the steps," whispered Jack in low, excited tones.

"That's right, so they are," breathed Billy cautiously. "Let's get behind the trees and learn what is going on."

"It's something crooked, that's sure," whispered Noddy.

"I begin to think so myself," agreed Jack, "but that man's voice, as well as his figure, seemed familiar to me when he hailed Judson, but I can't, for the life of me, think where I heard his voice before."

The three lads lost no time in concealing themselves behind some ornamental bushes in the immediate vicinity. They were none too soon, for hardly had they done so when the figures of two men and a boy appeared at the top of the steps.

"Phew," panted Judson, "I'm not as young as

I was. That climb has made me feel my age. Let's sit down here."

"Very well, that bench yonder will be just the place," agreed the man the boys had followed, and who had seemed so oddly familiar to Jack.

The seat they had selected could hardly have been a better one for the boys' purpose. It was placed right against the bush behind which they were hiding. The voices came to them clearly, although the speakers took pains to modify them.

"Well, I've been waiting for you," came in the voice of the man the boys had instinctively followed.

"We'd have got here sooner, but were delayed by an accident, or rather a sort of accident on purpose that occurred this afternoon. I was glad to see that you hadn't forgotten our night signal code," said Judson.

"What was the accident?" asked the man, who was a stranger to the boys, who were listening intently.

"Oh, just three brats who are summering here," scoffed Donald Judson. "They appeared to think they owned the bay, and I guess it was up to me to show them they didn't. I guess Jack Ready will be on the market for another boat before long and——"

"Hold on, hold on," exclaimed the strange man. "What was that name?"

"Ready, Jack Ready. He thinks he's a wizard at wireless. Why, do you know him, Jarrow?"

Jarrow, at the sound of the name there, brought into Jack's mind the recollections of the rascally partner of Terrill & Co., who had financed his uncle's treasure hunt and had then tried to steal the hoard from him. It was Jack who had overthrown the rascal's schemes and made him seek refuge in the west to escape prosecution. Yet he had apparently returned and in some way become associated with Judson. Noddy, too, as had Bill, had started at the name.

Both nudged Jack, who returned the gesture to show that he had heard and understood.

"So Ready is here, eh?" growled Jarrow. "Confounded young milksop."

"You appear not to be very fond of him," interjected the elder Judson.

"Fond of him! I should think not! I hate him like poison."

"What did he ever do to you?"

"He—er—er—he upset an—er—er—business deal I was in with his uncle."

"The one-legged old sea captain?"

"That's the fellow. He trusted me in everything till Jack Ready came nosing in and spoilt his uncle's chance of becoming a rich man through his association in business with me."

"I've no use for him either," exclaimed Donald vindictively. "I'll give him a good licking when I see him."

"Well, well, let's get down to business," said

the elder Judson decisively. "You have been to Washington, Jarrow?"

"Yes, and found out something, but not much. The new naval wireless code is not yet completed. I found out that by bribing a clerk in the Navy Department and——"

"This business is proving pretty expensive," grumbled Judson.

"We're playing for a big stake," was the reply. "I found out that the code has been placed in the hands of a Captain Simms, recently attached to the revenue service, for revision. I believe that it is the same Captain Simms against whom I have a grudge, for it was on his ship that I was insulted by aspersions on my business honesty, and that, also, was the work of this Jack Ready."

"Pity he didn't tell them that he was in irons at the time," thought Jack to himself.

"Where is this Captain Simms?" asked Judson, not noticing, or appearing not to, his companion's outbreak.

"That's just it," was the rejoinder. "Nobody knows. His whereabouts are being kept a profound secret. Since it has become rumored that the Navy wireless code was being revised, Washington fairly swarms with secret agents of different governments. Simms is either abroad or in some mighty safe place."

"Our hands are tied without him," muttered Judson, "and if I don't get that code I don't stand a chance of landing that big steel contract with the foreign power I have been dealing with."

"I'm afraid not," rejoined Jarrow. "I saw their representative in Washington and told him what I had learned. His answer was, 'no code, no contract.' I'm afraid you were foolish in using that promise as a means to try to land the deal."

"I had my thumb on the man who would have stolen it for me at the time," rejoined Judson, "but he was discharged for some minor dishonesty before I had a chance to use him."

"The thing to do is to locate this Captain Simms."

"Evidently, you must do your best. The wind has died down and I guess we'll stop at the hotel till to-morrow. Anyhow, it's too long a sail back to-night. Come on, Donald; come, Jarrow." The bench creaked as they rose and made off, turning their footsteps toward the hotel.

Not till they had gone some distance did the boys dare to speak, and even then they did not say much for a minute or two. The first expression came from Jack. It was a long, drawn-out:

"We-e-l!"

"And so that is the work that Captain Simms has been doing in that isolated retreat of his," exclaimed Billy.

"And these crooks have just had the blind luck to tumble over him," exploded Noddy. "Just wait till they take a look at the hotel register."

"Maybe by the time they enter their names the page will have turned," suggested Billy.

"No," rejoined Jack, "our names were at the top of the page and there would hardly have been enough new arrivals after us at this time of night to have filled it since."

"We must find Captain Simms at once and tell what is in the wind," decided the young wireless man a moment later. "I guess the instinct that made us follow Jarrow was a right one."

"I wonder how the rascal became acquainted with Judson?" pondered Billy.

"Mixed up with him in some crooked deal or other before this," said Noddy.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Jack.

They began to walk back to the hotel. They did not enter the lobby by the main entrance, for the path they followed had brought them to a side door. They were glad of this, for, screened by some palms, they saw, bending intently over the register, the forms of the three individuals whose conversation they had overheard.

CHAPTER VII.

THE NAVAL CODE.

"Now that you boys know the nature of the work I have been engaged on, I may as well tell you that confidential reports from Washington have warned me to be on my guard," said Captain Simms. "It was in reply to one of these that I sent a code dispatch to-night."

It was half an hour later, and they were all seated in the Captain's room, having told their story.

"But I should have imagined making up a code was a very simple matter," said Billy.

"That is just where you are wrong, my boy," smiled Captain Simms. "A commercial code, perhaps, can be jumbled together in any sort of fashion, but a practical naval code is a different matter. Besides dealing in technicalities it must

be absolutely invulnerable to even the cleverest reader of puzzles. The new code was necessitated by the fact that secret agents discovered that an expert in the employ of a foreign power had succeeded in solving a part of our old one. It was only a very small part, but in case of trouble with that country it might have meant defeat if the enemy knew even a fragment of the wireless code that was being flashed through the air."

"Have you nearly completed your work?" asked Jack.

"Almost," was the reply, "but the fact that these men are here rather complicates matters. At Musky Bay, the name of the little settlement where I am stopping, they think I am just a city man up for the fishing. I do not use my right name there. By an inadvertence, I suppose it was habit, I wrote it on the hotel register tonight. That was a sad blunder, for it is prac-

tically certain that these men will not rest till they have found out where I am working."

"At any rate I'm mighty glad we followed that Jarrow," said Jack.

"And caught enough of their plans to put you on guard," chimed in Billy.

"Yes, and I am deeply grateful to you boys," was the rejoinder. "'Forewarned is forearmed.' If Judson and his crowd attempt any foul tactics they will find me ready for them."

"Judson apparently wishes now that he had not been so anxious to secure that contract as to promise the naval code as a sort of bonus," said Jack.

"I don't doubt it," answered Captain Simms. "Now that I recall it, I heard rumors that Judson, who once had a steel contract with our government, is not so sound financially as he seems. I judge he would go to great lengths to assure a large contract that would get him out of his difficulties."

"I should imagine so," replied Jack. "What was the reason he never did any more work for the government?"

"The inferior quality of his product, I heard. There were ugly rumors concerning graft at the time. Some of the newspapers even went so far as to urge his prosecution."

"Then we are dealing with bad men?" commented Jack.

"Unquestionably so. But I think we had better break up this council of war and get to bed. I want to get an early start in the morning."

But when morning came, it was found that the repairs to the *Skipjack* would take longer than had been anticipated. While Captain Simms remained at the boat yard to superintend the work, the lads returned to the hotel and addressed some post cards. This done they sauntered out on the porch. Almost the first person they encountered chanced to be Jarrow. He started and turned a sickly yellow at the sight of them, al-

though he knew, from an inspection of the register the night before, that they were there.

"Why—er—ahem, so it is you once more. Where did you spring from?"

"We came out of that door," murmured Jack, while Noddy snickered. "Where did you come from?"

"I might say from the same place," was the rejoinder, with a look of malice at Noddy.

"We thought you were in the west," said Billy. "Great place, the west. They say the climate out there is healthier than the east—for some folks."

"Boy, you are impudent," snarled Jarrow.

"Not at all. I was merely making a meteorological remark," smiled Billy.

"Wait till I get that word," implored Noddy, pulling out a notebook and a stub of pencil.

"Splendid grounds they have here for taking strolls at night," Jack could not help observing.

From yellow Jarrow's face turned ashen pale.

Muttering something about a telephone call, he hurried into the hotel.

"Goodness, that shot brought down a bird, with a vengeance," chuckled Billy.

Jarrow's head was suddenly thrust out of an open window. He glared at the boys balefully. His face was black as a thundercloud.

"You boys have been playing the sneak on me," he cried angrily. "If you take my advice, you will not do so in the future."

He withdrew his head as quickly as a turtle draws its headpiece into its shell.

"He's a corker," cried Noddy. "I'll bet if he had a chance, he'd like to half kill us."

"Shouldn't wonder," laughed Jack, "but he isn't going to get that chance. But hullo! What's all this coming up the driveway?"

The others looked in the same direction and beheld a curious spectacle.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MONKEY INTERLUDE.

"Well, here's something new, and no mistake," cried Billy.

"Good, it will help pass our morning," declared Noddy, who was beginning to find time hang heavily on his hands now that he had nobody to play pranks on, like those he used to torment poor Pompey with.

An Italian was coming up the road toward the hotel. Strapped across his shoulders was a small hand-organ. He led a trained bear, and two monkeys squatted on the big creature's back. He came to a halt near the grinning boys.

"Hurray! This is going to be as good as a circus!" declared Noddy. "Start up your performance, professor."

"They're off!" cried Billy.

Summer residents of the hotel, anxious for any diversion out of the ordinary, came flocking to the scene as the strains of the barrel organ reached their ears, and the bear, in a clumsy fashion, began to dance to the music of the ear-piercing instrument.

"Where are you going, Noddy?" asked Jack, as the red-headed lad tried to get quietly out of the crowd.

"I just saw a chance for a little fun," rejoined Noddy innocently.

"Well, be careful," warned Jack. "This is no place for such jokes as you used to play on Pompey."

"Oh, nothing like that," Noddy assured him as he hurried off.

"Just the same I'm afraid of Noddy when he starts getting humorous," thought Jack.

He would have been still more afraid if he could have seen Noddy make his way to the hotel kitchen and bribe a kitchen maid to get him

three large sugar cakes. Then he made his way to the dining-room, and boring tiny holes in the buns filled each of them with red pepper from the casters.

"Now for some fun," he chuckled.

"I just know that boy is up to some mischief by the look on his face," remarked an old lady as he hurried by.

Quite a big crowd was round the Italian when Noddy got back. Almost as soon as he arrived the man began passing the hat, and taking advantage of this, Noddy proffered his buns to the animals. They accepted them greedily.

"Peep! Peep!" chattered the monkeys.

"You mean 'pep,' 'pep,'" chuckled Noddy to himself.

Both bear and monkeys tore into their buns as if they were half starved. In their hunger they got a few mouthfuls down without appearing to notice that anything was wrong. Then suddenly one of the monkeys hurled his bun at

the bear and the other leaped on the big hairy creature's head. Apparently they thought the innocent bear had something to do with the trick that had been played on them.

"Da monk! da monk!" howled the Italian, "da monk go a da craz'."

"He says they are mad," exclaimed an old gentleman, and hurried away.

Just as he did so, the bear discovered something was wrong. He set up a roar of rage and broke loose from his keeper. The monkeys leaped away from the angry beast and sought refuge. One jumped on the head of an elderly damsel who was very much excited. The other made a dive for a fashionably dressed youth who was none other than Donald Judson.

"Help!" screamed the old maid. "Help! Will no one help me?"

"I will, madam," volunteered an old gentleman, coming forward. He seized the monkey

and tugged at its hind legs, but it only clung the tighter to the elderly damsel's hair.

Suddenly there came a piercing scream.

"Gracious, her hair's come off!" cried a woman.

"She's been scalped, poor creature!" declared another.

"Oh, you wretch, how dare you!" shrieked the monkey's victim, rushing at the gallant old gentleman. She raised her parasol and brought it down on his head with a resounding crack. In the meantime the Italian was howling to "Garibaldi," as he called the monkey, to come to him.

But this the monkey had no intention of doing. Clutching the old maid's wig in its hands, it leaped away in bounds and joined its brother on the person of Donald Judson.

"Ouch, take them off. They'll bite me!" Donald was yelling.

The monkeys tore off his straw hat with its fancy ribbon and tore it to bits and flung them

in the faces of the crowd. Then, suddenly, they both darted swiftly off and climbed a tree, where they sat chattering.

It was at that moment that the confused throng recollected the bear, which had not remained in the vicinity but had gone charging off across the lawn looking for water to drown the burning sensation within him. Now, however, an angry roar reminded them of him. The beast was coming back across the lawn, roaring and showing his teeth.

"Look out for the bear!"

"Get a gun, quick."

"Oh, he'll hug me," this last from the old maid, were some of the cries which the crowd sent up.

"He's mad, shoot him!" cried somebody. The Italian set up a howl of protest.

"No, no, no shoota heem. Mika da gooda da bear. No shoota heem."

"If you don't want him shot, catch him and

get out of here. You'll have my hotel turned into a sanitarium for nervous wrecks the first thing you know," cried the proprietor of the place.

"Somebody playa da treeck," protested the Italian. "Mika da nica da bear, da gooda da bear."

"I guess he's like an Indian, only good when he's dead," said the hotel man. "I'm off to get my gun."

Noddy watched the results of his joke with mixed feelings. He had not meant it to go as far as this. He looked about him apprehensively, but everybody was too frightened to notice him.

Suddenly the bear headed straight for Noddy. Perhaps his red head was a shining mark or perhaps the creature recollected the prank-playing youth as the one who had given him the peppered bun. At any rate he charged straight after the lad, who fled for his life.

"Help!" he called as he ran. "Help, help!"

"Noddy's getting a dose of his own medicine," cried Jack to Billy.

"But we don't want to let the bear get him," protested Billy.

"Of course not, but he'll beat the bear into the hotel, see if he doesn't."

The hotel front door was evidently Noddy's objective point. It appeared he would reach it first, but suddenly he tripped on a croquet hoop and went sprawling. He was up in a minute, but the bear had gained on him. As he rushed up the steps it was only a few inches behind him.

Noddy gave a wild yell and took the steps in three jumps. The next second he was at the door and swinging it shut with all his might. But just then an astonishing thing happened.

Just as Noddy swung the door shut the bear made a leap. The result surprised Noddy as much as Bruin.

The edge of the door caught the big creature's neck and held him as fast as if he had been

caught in a dead-fall. He was gripped as in a vise between the door and the frame. But poor Noddy was in the position of the man who caught the wild cat.

He didn't know how to let go!

CHAPTER IX.

NODDY AND THE BEAR.

"I've got him!" yelled Noddy. "Help me, somebody!"

"Goodness, Noddy's caught the bear," cried Jack, as he and Billy streaked across the lawn, followed by the less timid of the guests.

"Hold him tight," shouted some in the crowd.

"Let him go," bawled others.

Perspiring from his efforts, Noddy braced his feet and kept the door tightly closed on the bear's neck. But the creature's struggles made the portal groan and creak as if it would be shoved off its hinges.

"Gracious, I can't hold it much longer. Can't somebody hit him on the head with a club?"

The negro bell boys and clerk, together with several of the guests who had been in the lobby,

began to come back, now that they saw there was no immediate chance of the bear rushing in.

"Ah reckon ah knows a way ter fix dat b'ar widout hurting him," cried one of the negro boys.

He snatched a fire extinguisher off the wall of the office and squirted its contents full in the bear's face. The animal gave one roar of dismay and a mighty struggle that burst the door open and threw Noddy off his feet. He set up a yell of fright. But he need not have been afraid. The ugliness had all gone out of the bear, and besides being half choked he was temporarily blinded by the contents of the fire extinguisher.

The Italian came running up, carrying a chain and a muzzle.

"Gooda da boy! Gooda da Mika!" he cried ingratiatingly.

The bear was as mild as a kitten, but nevertheless the muzzle was buckled on and the Italian departed in search of his monkeys just as the

manager appeared with his gun. It had taken him a long time to find, he explained, whereat Noddy, who had recovered his spirits, snickered.

"I'm going to pay the bill and get out of here," whispered Jack in Noddy's ear. "You'd better get away as quietly as you can. Several people saw you give those buns to the animals. If they find you here, they'll mob you."

"Being chased by a bear is quite enough excitement for one day," rejoined Noddy, "but my! It was good fun while it lasted. Did you see that old maid's hair, did you see Donald Judson, did you——"

"Get out of here quickly," warned Jack, and this time Noddy took his advice without waiting. It was just as well he did, for the elderly gentleman, whose shining bald head had been belabored by the old maid's parasol, came in, accompanied by the damsel. She had recovered her hair when the monkeys were caught and had tendered handsome apologies to the would-be gallant.

"Where is that boy who started all this?" demanded the old gentleman.

"It was one of that gang there," cried Donald Judson, who had followed them and whose face showed plenty of scratches where the monkeys had clambered up to demolish his hat.

"Oh, what a terrible boy he must be," cried the old maid. "He ought to go to prison. Where is he?"

"Ask them, they'll know," cried Donald, pointing to Jack and Billy.

"No, it wasn't either of them. They were back in the crowd," cried the old maid; "it was another boy, a red-headed one."

"I'm glad I told Noddy to get out," whispered Jack to his friends.

"Look, they are whispering to each other. I told you they knew all about it," cried Donald, who saw a chance of avenging himself for his treatment by the monkeys.

"Say, young man," said the manager, coming

up to Jack, "I think your friend was responsible for this rumpus."

"What rumpus?"

"Why, that trouble with the bear, of course. You boys are at the bottom of it all."

"Why, the bear chased my friend harder than anyone else," said Jack, with assumed indignation.

"I guess we'll pay our bill and leave," struck in Billy.

"Think you'd better, eh?" sneered the manager.

"If you want your money you'd better be civil," said Jack.

"Yes, but—your bill is eight dollars."

"Here it is. Now don't bother us any more or I'll report you to the proprietor.

"I know, but look here."

"I can't see in that direction."

"I don't know if that man has caught his monkeys yet."

"No use of your worrying about that unless you're afraid one of them will get your job."

There was a loud laugh at this and in the midst of it the boys passed out of the hotel, leaving the clerk very red about the ears.

"I hope that will teach Noddy a lesson," said Jack, as they hurried down to the boat yard where Noddy had been instructed to precede them.

"It ought to. Being chased by a bear is no joke."

But when they reached the yard they were just in time to see the man who was working on the boat clap his hand to the back of his neck and yell:

"Ouch! A bee stung me."

Not far off, looking perfectly innocent, stood Noddy, but Jack detected him in the act of slipping into his pocket a magnifying glass, by which he focused the sun's rays on the workman's neck.

CHAPTER X.

"WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF IT?"

The *Skipjack* was all ready for them and no delay was had in making a start back to Musky Bay, where, it will be remembered, the boys had left their boat to be repaired. A brief stop was made at the Pine Island hotel and then the trip was resumed.

"Wonder where Judson and his crowd have gone to?" pondered Jack, as they moved rapidly over the water.

"One thing sure, they never started back home in the *Speedaway this* morning," said Billy. "The water is like glass, and there's not a breath of wind."

"Look, there's a handsome motor boat off yonder," exclaimed Jack presently. He pointed

to a low, black craft, some distance behind them and closer in to the shore.

"She's making fast time," said Bill.

"Maybe she wants to give us a race," suggested Noddy.

"I'm afraid we wouldn't stand much chance with her," laughed Captain Simms.

They watched the black boat for a time, but she appeared to slacken speed as she drew closer, as if those in charge of her had no desire to come any nearer to the *Skipjack* than they were.

"That's odd," remarked Jack. "There is evidently nothing the matter with her engine, but for all that they don't seem to want to pass us. That's the first fast boat I ever saw act that way."

"It does seem queer," said Captain Simms, and suddenly his brow clouded.

"Could it be possible——" he exclaimed, and stopped short.

Jack looked at him in a questioning way.

"Could what be possible, sir?" he asked.

"Why, that Judson and the others are on board that black craft?"

"Ginger! That never occurred to me!" cried Jack; "and yet, if they were following us to find out where you are located that would be just the sort of way in which they would behave."

"So I was thinking," said Captain Simms thoughtfully. "However, we can soon find out."

He opened a locker and took out his binoculars. Then he focused them on the black craft.

"Well?" questioned Jack, as the captain laid them down again.

"There's a man at the wheel, but he isn't the least like your descriptions of your men," said the captain.

"What does he look like?" questioned Billy.

"He's rather tall and has a full black beard," was the answer.

"Then it's not one of Judson's crowd," said Jack with conviction.

"I guess we are all the victims of nerves to-day," smiled the captain.

They swung round a point and threaded the channel that led among the shoaly waters of Musky Bay. The point shut out any rearward view of the black motor boat and they saw no more of it. Captain Simms invited them up to the house he occupied, which was isolated from the half dozen or so small habitations that made up the settlement. It was plainly furnished and the living room was littered with papers and documents

"What made you select Musky Bay as a retreat?" asked Jack.

"I come from up in this part of the country," rejoined Captain Simms, "and I thought this would be a good quiet place to hide myself till my work was complete. But it seems," he added, with a smile, "that I may have been mistaken."

"Oh, I don't know," replied Jack. "Those

fellows would never think of trailing you here. I guess they think you are still in Clayton."

"Let us hope so, anyway," said the captain, and here the discussion ended.

Soon after they said good-by, promising to run over again before long. Their boat was all ready for them. A good job had been done with it.

"It looks as good as new," commented Jack.

"She's a fine boat," said Billy.

"A regular pippin," agreed Noddy.

"Well, young men, your-craft-will-carry-you-through many a blow yet. She's as nice a little-ship-as-I-ever-saw."

"I guess he says that of every boat that brings him a job," grinned Noddy, as Jack paid the man, and they got ready to get under way. A light breeze had risen, and they were soon skimming along, taking great care to avoid shoals and sand-banks. By standing up to steer, Jack was easily able to trace the deeper water by its

darker color and they got out of the bay without trouble.

As they glided round the point, which had shrouded the black motor boat from their view when they entered the bay, Billy, who was in the bow, uttered a sharp cry and pointed. The others looked in the direction he indicated, realizing that something unusual was up.

"Well, look at that, will you?" exclaimed Jack.

The black motor-boat was anchored close in to the shore. Her dinghy lay on the beach, showing that somebody had just landed. Clambering up the steep and rocky sides of the point were three figures. When the boys caught sight of them the trio had just gained the summit of the rocky escarpment.

They crouched behind rocks, as if fearing that they would be seen, and one of them drew from his pocket a pair of field glasses. He gazed through these down at the settlement of Musky Bay, which lay below. Then he turned to his

companions and made some remark and each in turn took up the glasses.

"What do you make of it?" asked Billy, turning to Jack.

The wireless boy shook his head dubiously.

"I'll tell you what *I* make of it," he said. "Just this. Those three figures up yonder are Judson, Donald and Jarrow. They trailed us here in that motor boat but were too foxy to round the point. When they saw us turn into the bay, they knew they could land and sneak over the point without being seen. They are spying on the settlement and watching for Captain Simms. At any rate, they will see his boat tied up there and realize that they have struck a home trail."

"What will we do?" asked Billy, rather helplessly.

"There's only one thing to do," said Jack with decision, "and that is to turn back and warn Captain Simms of what is going on."

The *Curlew* was headed about and a few moments later was in sight of Musky Bay again.

CHAPTER XI.

A SWIM WITH A MEMORY.

"So they did find me out, after all?" said Captain Simms grimly, after he had heard the boys' story. "Well, it will not do them much good. I am well armed and the government is at my back. If I get the chance I will deal with those rascals with no uncertain hand."

"Why don't you have them arrested right now?" asked Noddy.

"Because it would be premature to do so at the present moment. The agents of several nations are keen on getting a copy of the code. If these men were arrested, it would reveal, directly, the whereabouts of the code and its author."

"It seems too bad such rascals can carry on their intrigues without being punished," said Jack.

As it was noon by that time, and the appetites of all were sharp set, Captain Simms invited the boys to have lunch with him. It was a simple meal, consisting mainly of fish; but the boys did ample justice to it, and finished up with some pie, which the captain had brought from Clayton to replenish his larder.

After dinner the capricious breeze died out entirely. The heat was intense, and the water glittered like a sheet of molten glass. The boys looked longingly at the bay, however. The idea of a cool swim seemed very attractive just then. Captain Simms had left them to their own devices while he took a nap.

"Tell you what," said Billy, "let's take a swim, eh, fellows?"

"Suits me down to the ground," said Jack.

"Suits me down to the water," grinned Noddy.

They had bathing trunks on their boat, and, having found what looked like a good spot, a

little cove with a sandy beach, they disrobed and were soon sporting in the water.

"Ouch! It's colder than I thought it was," cried Noddy.

"You'll soon warm up," encouraged Jack. "I'll race you out to that anchored boat."

"Bully for you," cried Billy.

"You're on," echoed Noddy, not to be outdone. But, as a matter of fact, the red-headed lad, who had eaten far more than the others, wasn't feeling very well. However, he did not wish to spoil the fun, so he didn't say anything.

Jack and Billy struck out with long, strong strokes.

"Come on," cried Jack, looking back at Noddy, who was left behind, and who began to feel worse and worse. "What's the trouble—want a tow-rope?"

"I'll beat you yet, Jack Ready," cried Noddy, fighting off a feeling of nausea.

"I guess I went in the water too soon after eating," he thought. "It will wear off."

"Help!"

The single, half-choked cry for aid reached the ears of Jack and Billy when they were almost at the anchored boat, which was the objective point of the race.

"Great Cæsar!" burst from Jack. "What's up now?"

He turned round just in time to see Noddy's arms go up in the air. Then the red-headed lad sank out of sight like a stone.

"He can't be fooling, can he?" exclaimed Billy nervously.

"He wouldn't be so silly as to do that," rejoined Jack, who was already striking out for the spot where Noddy had vanished. Billy followed him closely.

They were still some yards off when Noddy suddenly reappeared. He was struggling desperately, and his eyes seemed to be popping out of

his head. His arms circled wildly, splashing the water helplessly. Then he disappeared once more.

"Heavens, he is drowning," choked out Jack. "We must save him, Billy."

"Of course we will, old boy," panted Billy, upon whom the pace was beginning to tell.

Jack reached the spot where the disturbed water showed that Noddy had gone down for the second time. Just as he gained the place Noddy shot up again. He was totally unconscious and sank again almost instantly.

Like a flash Jack was after him, diving down powerfully. He grasped Noddy round the chest under the arms.

"Noddy! Noddy!" he exclaimed, as they shot to the surface. But the lad's eyes were closed, his face was deadly white, and his matted hair lay over his eyes. A terrible thought invaded Jack's mind. What if Noddy were dead and had been rescued too late?

"Here, give me one of his arms. We must get him ashore as quickly as we can," cried Billy.

"That's right; he's a dead weight. Oh, Billy, I hope that he isn't——"

A moan came from Noddy. Suddenly he opened his eyes and grasped at Jack wildly, with five times his normal strength. The movement was so unexpected that Jack was dragged under water. But the next moment Noddy's drowning grip relaxed and they rose to the surface.

"He's unconscious again," panted Jack. "He'll be all right, now. Take hold, Billy, and we'll make for the shore."

It was an exhausting swim, but at last they reached shallow water, and, ceasing swimming, carried Noddy to the beach. They anxiously bent over him.

"We must get that water out of his lungs," declared Jack, who knew something of how to treat the half-drowned.

Luckily, an old barrel had drifted ashore not

far off, and over this poor Noddy was rolled and pounded and then hoisted up by the ankles till most of the water was out of his lungs and he began to take deep, gasping breaths.

But it was a long time before he was strong enough to get on his feet, and even then his two chums had to support him back to Captain Simms' house, where they received a severe lecture for going in the water so soon after eating.

"It was an awful sensation," declared Noddy. "It just hit me like an electric shock. I couldn't move a limb. Then I don't remember much of anything more till I found myself on the beach."

Noddy's deep gratitude to his friends may be imagined, but it was too painful a subject to be talked about. It was a long while, however, before any of them got over the recollection of Noddy's peril.

CHAPTER XII.

A TALE FROM THE FROZEN LANDS.

Although Noddy had recovered remarkably quick, thanks to his rugged constitution, from the effects of his immersion, Captain Simms ordered him on the sick-list and he was, much against his will, sent to bed.

"He'd better stay there all night," said the captain. "We don't want to run any risks of pneumonia. I don't suppose your uncle will worry about you?"

"He's got over that long ago," laughed Jack; "besides, there's a professor stopping at the hotel who is on the lookout for funny plants and herbs. That's Uncle Toby's long suit, you know."

"So I have heard," smiled the captain. "Well, you boys may as well make yourselves at home."

"Thank you, we will," said Billy. Whereat there was a general laugh.

There was a phonograph and a good selection of records in the cottage, so they managed to while away a pleasant afternoon. Jack cooked supper, "just by way of paying for our board," he said. After the meal they sat up for a time listening to Captain Simms' tales of seal poachers in the Arctic and the trouble they give the patrol assigned to see that they do not violate the international boundary, and other laws. Before he had taken command of the *Thespis,* of the Iceberg Patrol, Captain Simms had been detailed to command of the *Bear* revenue cutter, and had chased and captured many a sealer who was plying his trade illicitly.

The boys listened attentively as he told them of the rough hardships of such a life, and how, sometimes, a whole fleet of sealers, if frozen in by an early formation of ice, must face hunger

and sometimes death till the spring came to release them from their imprisonment.

"It must take a lot of nerve and courage to be a sealer," said Jack.

"It certainly does," agreed the captain. "Yet I heard from one sealing captain the story of a young fellow whom it turned from a weak coward into a brave man. This lad, who was regarded as a weakling, saved himself and two companions from a terrible death simply by an act of almost sublime courage. Would you like to hear the story?"

"If you don't mind spinning the yarn," said Jack.

"Well, then," began the captain, "to start with, the name of my hero is Shavings. Of course he had another name, but that's the one he was always known by, and I've forgotten the right one. He was a long-legged, lanky Vermont farmer, with dank strings of yellow hair hanging about his mild face. This hair gave him his

nickname aboard the sealing schooner, *Janet Barry,* on which he signed as a boat man. How Shavings came to St. Johns, from which port the *Janet Barry* sailed, or why he picked out such a job, nobody ever knew. He had, as sailors say, 'hayseed in his hair' and knew nothing about a ship.

"But what he didn't know he soon learned under the rough method of tuition they employed on the *Barry.* A mate with a rope's end sent him aloft for the first time and kept sending him there till Shavings learned how to clamber up the ratlines with the best of them. He learned boatwork in much the same way, although he passed through a lot of experiences while chasing seals, that scared him badly. He told the captain long afterward that, although he was afraid of storms and gales, still he sometimes welcomed them, because he knew the boats would not have to go out.

"One day, far to the north, they ran into an

exceptionally fine school of seals. All the boats were sent away, and among them the one to which Shavings belonged. In command of this boat was Olaf Olsen, the mate who had taught Shavings the rudiments of his profession by means of hard knocks. Dark clouds were scurrying across the sky, and the sea looked angry, but that made no difference to the sealers. Lives or no lives, women in the States had to have their sealskin coats.

"So the boats pursued the seals for a long distance, and in the excitement nobody noticed what the weather was doing. Nobody, that is, but Shavings, and he didn't dare to say that it was growing worse, for fear of angering the mate. The hunters harpooned a goodly catch before the gale was upon the little fleet almost without warning.

"Then the storm broke with a screech and a massing of angry water. The boats had been under sail, and in a flash two of them were over-

turned. Shavings saw all this with terror in his eyes and a cold clutch at his heart. He knew the men in those boats would never go sealing again.

"Then his eyes fell on the mate, Olaf Olsen. The man appeared to be petrified with fright. He made no move to do anything. Then something in Shavings seemed to wake up.

"Perhaps that yellow hair of his was a survival of some old Viking strain, or perhaps all those months of rough sea life had made him over without his knowing it. But he seized the mate and shook him by the shoulder:

" 'Give an order, man!' he shouted. 'Order the sail reefed.'

"But the sight of the death of his shipmates had so unnerved the mate that he could no nothing. Shavings kicked him disgustedly, and went about the job himself. Clouds of spray burst over him. Time and again he was within an inch of being swept overboard, but at last he had the

sail reefed down. Then he took the tiller and headed back for the schooner across the immense seas through the screeching gale.

He handled that boat skillfully, meeting the big seas and riding their summits, only to be buried the next instant in the watery valley between the giant combers. But always he rose. He had the cheering sight of the schooner before him and it grew closer. The boat sailed more on her beam than on her keel, but at last Shavings, more dead than alive, ran her in under the lee of the schooner's hull, and willing hands got the survivors out of the boat.

"The skipper of that craft was a rough man. He drove Olaf Olsen forward with blows and curses and the strong Swede whimpered like a whipped cur. Then he came aft to where the cook was giving Shavings and the rest hot coffee.

" 'Shavings,' he said, 'after this you're mate in that coward Olsen's place. You're a man.'

" 'No, sirree,' rejoined Shavings, 'I'm a farmer. No mate's job for me. When we gets back ter home I'm goin' ter take my share uv ther catch and buy a farm.'

"But he was finally persuaded to take the job of mate when his canny New England mind grasped the fact that the mate's share of the profits is much bigger than a foremast hand's. He was as good as his word, however, and, when the *Janet Barry,* with her flag at half mast but her hold full of fine skins, docked at St. Johns after the season was over, Shavings drew his money and vanished. I suppose he is farming it somewhere in Vermont now, but I agree with his captain, who told me the story, that there was a fine sailor lost in Shavings."

CHAPTER XIII.

A NIGHT ALARM.

Jack sat bolt upright in bed and listened with all his might. Outside the window of the little room he occupied that night in the captain's cottage he was almost certain he had heard the sound of a furtive footfall and whisperings. His blood beat in his eardrums as he sat tense and rigid, waiting a repetition of the noise.

Suddenly, there came a low whisper from outside.

"If only we knew if the captain was alone. For all we know those bothersome boys may be with him, and, if they are, we are likely to get the worst of it."

"Donald Judson!" exclaimed Jack to himself. "What ought I to do?"

He pondered a moment and then recollected

that there was a door to his room which let directly out on a back porch without the occupant of the room having to traverse any other chamber. Jack at once formed a bold resolve. He did not wish to arouse the others unnecessarily, but he did want, with all his power, to find out what was going on.

He rose from the bed as cautiously as he could, and made his way to the door. It was a ticklish task, in the dark, to accomplish without noise, but he succeeded in doing it. Outside it was very dark, with a velvety sort of blackness. The boy was glad of this, for it afforded him protection from the men he felt sure were reconnoitering the house for no good purpose.

Suddenly he saw, not far off, the gleam of a light of some sort. If it belonged to the Judsons. They must have presumed that nobody was about, or not have realized that the place where they had left it was visible from the cottage.

"Now I wonder what they've got up there?"

mused Jack. "Maybe it would be a good scheme to go up and see."

Anything that looked like an adventure aroused Jack's animation, and a few seconds after the idea had first taken hold of him he was making his way up a rather steep hillside, covered with rocks and bushes, toward the light. At last he reached a place where he could get a good look at the shining beacon. He hardly knew what he had expected to see, but somehow he felt a sort of sense of disappointment.

The lantern stood by itself on a rock and the idea suggested itself to Jack that it might have been placed there as a beacon to guide the midnight visitors back when they had accomplished whatever they purposed doing.

"I've a good mind to carry off their lantern," said Jack to himself; "if they put it there to guide them that would leave them in a fine fix and we could easily capture them."

Once more, half involuntarily, his feet ap-

peared to draw him toward the lantern. The next instant he had it in his grasp.

"Now to turn it out," he muttered, when he felt himself seized from behind in a powerful grip and a harsh voice growled in his ear:

"Yer would, would yer, you precious young scallywag."

The lantern was wrested from his grasp, and Jack felt a noose slipped over his head.

"Who are you?" he demanded indignantly of his unknown captor.

"Bill Smiggers, of the motor boat *Black Beauty,*" was the gruff reply. "They left me up here to watch by the light, and I guess they'll be glad they did when they see who I've caught. I reckon you're one of those snoopy kids I've heard them talking about."

"I don't know what you mean," replied Jack, "but you'd better let me go at once."

"Huh, I'd be a fine softy to do that, wouldn't I? No, young man, here you are, and here you

stay. I'm getting well paid for this job, and I'm going to do a good one."

Just then footsteps were heard coming up the hillside. Then a low, cautious voice whispered out of the darkness:

"What's the matter, Bill? We saw the light waved, and came right back. Is there any danger?"

"Not right now, I reckon," rejoined Bill, with grim humor. "Any of you gents know this young bantam I've got triced up here?"

"Jack Ready, by all that's wonderful!" cried Judson, stepping forward. He was followed by young Judson and Jarrow.

"Dear me, what an—er—what a pleasant encounter," grinned Jarrow.

"So you thought you'd spy on us, did you?" snarled Donald, vindictively; "well, this is the time that we've got you and got you right."

Jack's heart, stout as it was, sank like lead

within him. He was in the hands of his enemies and that, largely, by his own foolishness.

"So this is that Ready kid I hearn you talkin' about?" asked Bill.

"That's the boy, confound him! He's always meddling in my schemes," growled Jarrow.

"Bright looking lad, ain't he?"

"Too bright for his own good. He's so sharp he'll cut himself."

"No, his brightness won't help him now," chuckled Donald maliciously. "I'll bet you're scared to death," he went on, coming close to Jack.

"Not particularly. It takes more than a parcel of cowards and crooks to frighten me."

"Don't you put on airs with me. You're in our power now," jeered Donald. "I'll make you suffer for the way you've treated me."

"It would be like you to take advantage of the fact that my arms are tied," retorted Jack.

Donald came a step closer and stuck his fist under Jack's nose.

"You be careful, or I'll crack you one," he snarled.

"You're a nice sort of an individual, I must say. Why don't you try fair dealing for a change?"

"I do deal fair. It's you that don't. I——"

"That will do," interrupted his father; "I've been talking with Bill and he says he knows a place where we can take this young bantam and leave him till he cools off."

"You mean that you are going to imprison me?" demanded Jack indignantly.

"You may call it that, if you like," said Judson imperturbably; "you are quite too clever a lad to have at large."

"Where are you taking me to?"

"You'll find that out soon enough. Now then, forward march and, if you attempt to make an outcry, you'll feel this on your head."

Judson, with a wicked smile, flourished a stout club under the captive boy's nose.

CHAPTER XIV.

JACK'S CURIOSITY AND ITS RESULTS.

"What do you intend to do with me?" repeated Jack, as they hurried over the rough ground, following Bill, who trudged ahead with the lantern.

"You'll find out quick enough, I told you before," said Donald.

"Don't you know that my friends are in the neighborhood? They will invoke the law against you for this outrage."

"We know all about that," was the elder Judson's reply, "but we're not worrying. We'll have them prisoners, too, before long."

Jack made no reply to this, but he judged it was an empty threat made to scare him. He knew that nothing would have delighted Donald Judson more than to see him breaking down. So he

kept up a brave front, which he was in reality far from feeling at heart.

From the bold manner in which Bill displayed the lantern as he led the party on, Jack knew that the rascal must be familiar with the country, and know it to be sparsely inhabited. So far as Jack could judge they were retreating from the river and going up hill.

About an hour after they had started, Bill paused in front of an ancient stone dwelling—or rather what had been a dwelling, for it was now dilapidated and deserted.

"This is the place, boss," he grated, holding up his lantern so that its rays fell on the old place, which looked as grim as a fortress.

"It's haunted, too, isn't it, Bill?" asked Donald meaningly.

"Well, they do say there was a terrible murder done here some years ago and that's the reason it's been deserted ever since, but I really could not say as to the truth of that, Master Judson," re-

joined Bill, falling into Donald's plan to tease Jack.

Inside the place was one large room. A few broken bits of furniture stood about. Bill set the lantern down on a rickety table and then went to guard the door, while the others retreated to a corner and held a parley.

At its conclusion Judson came over to Jack.

"Well, Ready," he said, "you've caused us a lot of trouble, but still I might come to terms with you."

"Are you ready to release me?" demanded Jack.

"Yes, under certain conditions. First, you must tell us all you know about that naval code of Captain Simms."

"And the truth, too," snarled Jarrow. "We'll find out quick enough if you're lying, and we'll make it hot for you."

"You bet we will," chimed in Donald.

"Donald, be quiet a minute," ordered his father. "Well, Ready, what have you to say?"

"Suppose I tell you I know nothing about the naval code?" said Jack quietly.

"Then I should say you were not telling the truth."

"Nevertheless I am."

"What, you know nothing about the code?"

"Nothing except that Captain Simms was ordered to get up something of the sort."

"You don't know if it's finished or not?"

"I have no idea."

"Is your life worth anything to you?" struck in Jarrow.

"What do you mean?" asked Jack.

"Just what I say. If it is, you had better make terms to save it."

"Impossible. You are fooling with me, Jarrow. Even a man as base as you wouldn't dare——"

"I wouldn't, eh? Well, you'll find out before long if I'm in earnest or not."

Jack was a brave lad, as we know, and carried himself well through many dangerous situations. But he was not the dauntless hero of a nickel novel whom nothing could scare. He knew Jarrow for a desperado and, although he could not bring himself to believe the man would actually carry out any such threat as he had made, still he realized to the full the peril of his situation.

"Well, what do you say?" demanded Jarrow, after a pause.

"I don't know just what to say," said Jack. "My head is all in a whirl. Give me time to think the thing over. I can hardly collect my thoughts at present."

The men made some further attempts to get something out of him, but, finding him obdurate, they ordered Bill to see that his bonds were tight and then to put him in the "inner room" he had spoken of. Bill gave the ropes a savage yank,

found they were tight and then led Jack to a green door at the farther end of the large room. Jack had a glimpse of a square room with a broad fireplace at one end and a small window. It appeared to be used as a storehouse of some kind, for it was half filled with bags, apparently containing potatoes. In one corner stood a grindstone operated by a treadle. Then the door was shut with a bang, and he was left to his own, none-too-pleasant reflections. Outside he could hear the buzz of voices. But he couldn't catch much of what was being said. Once he heard Jarrow say:

"You're too soft with the boy. A good lashing with a black-snake would bring him to his senses quick enough."

"I'd like to lay it on," he heard Donald chime in.

At last they appeared to grow sleepy. Jack heard a key turned in the lock of the inner room that he occupied and not long thereafter came

the sound of snores. Evidently nobody was on guard, the men who had captured him thinking that there was no chance of the boy's escape.

"Now's my chance," thought Jack. "If only I could get my hands free, I might be able to do something. But, as it is, I'm helpless."

His heart sank once more, as he thought bitterly of the predicament into which his own foolhardiness had drawn him.

CHAPTER XV.

BILLY TAKES THE TRAIL.

"What's the matter?"

Just as Jack stole out of the house Billy Raynor sat bolt upright in bed and asked himself that question. He was on the other side of the cottage, and, like Jack a few minutes before, he too heard the cautious footsteps of the marauders, as they crept round the cottage, reconnoitering.

"Somebody's up to mischief," thought the boy. "It may only be common thieves, or it may be that rascally outfit. I'll go and rouse Jack. Perhaps we can get after them."

He tiptoed across the main room of the cottage to Jack's door. Inside the room he struck a match. He almost cried out aloud when he saw that the bed was empty and that there was no sign of his chum.

"Where can he be?" though the lad. "Surely he has not gone after that gang single-handed."

Raynor hastened to his own room, slipped on some clothes, and went to the door. Far up on the hillside a lantern was twinkling like some fallen star.

"That's mighty odd," reflected the lad. "I guess I'll take a look up there and see what's coming off."

He picked his way cautiously up the rough hillside. But the lantern retreated as he went forward. As we know, Judson and his gang, led by Bill, were carrying off Jack. Without realizing how far he had gone, Raynor kept on and on. Some instinct told him that the dodging will-o'-the-wisp of light ahead of him had something to do with Jack, and he wanted to find out what that something was.

But, not knowing the trail Bill was following, and having no light but the spark ahead of him, Raynor found it pretty hard traveling. At last

he was so tired that he sat down to snatch a moment's rest, leaning his back against a bush.

As his weight came against the bush, however, a strange thing happened. The shrub gave way altogether under the pressure. Raynor struggled for an instant to save himself, and then felt himself tumbling backward down an unknown height. He gave a shout of alarm, but his progress down what appeared to be a steep wall of rock, was over almost as soon as it had begun.

"What happened?" gasped the lad, as, shaken by his adventure, he picked himself up and tried to collect his wits. "Oh, yes, I know, that bush gave way and I toppled over backward. I must be in some sort of hole in the ground. Well, the first thing to do is to get a light."

Luckily Raynor's pockets held several matches, and he struck one of them and looked about him.

His eyes fell on the bush which lay at his feet.

"No wonder it gave way," he muttered. "The thing is dead and withered. But"—as a sudden

thought struck him—"it will make a dandy torch and help save matches."

He lit the dead bush, which blazed up bravely, illumining his surroundings with a ruddy glow. Above him was a dark hole, presumably the one through which he had fallen. But there was no way of escape in that direction. He turned his gaze another way. The cave appeared to recede beyond the light of the blazing branch.

Looking down, he saw that the floor of the cave was thickly littered with leaves and small branches. This encouraged him a good deal.

"They couldn't have been blown in by the hole I fell through," he mused, "for the dead bush covered that. Their being here must mean that there is another entrance to this place."

Carrying his torch aloft, he struck off into the cave. Its floor sloped gently upward as he progressed and the walls began to grow narrower. The air, too, rapidly lost its musty odor, and blew fresh and sweet on his perspiring head.

"This will be quite an adventure to tell about if I ever get out of here," muttered Raynor, and the thought of Jack, whom he had almost forgotten in his fright at his fall into the cave, occurred to him.

What could have happened to his chum? Surely he had not been foolhardy enough to face the marauders alone? Raynor did not know what to make of it.

"Somehow," he pondered, "I am sure that lantern had something to do with Jack. I wonder if they would have dared to carry him off? I wish to goodness I'd kept on, instead of leaning against that bush. Even if I do get out of here, the light must be far out of sight by this time, and I'll have to wait till daylight, anyhow, for I must have walked almost a mile from the other entrance to the cave by this time."

His thoughts ran along in this strain as he walked. The thought of Captain Simms' alarm,

too, when he found both boys missing, gave him a good deal of worry.

He was thinking over this phase of the situation when he was startled by a low growl, coming from a pile of rocks just ahead of him. What could it be? Holding his breath painfully, while a cold chill ran down his spine, Raynor came to a dead pause and listened. His improvised torch had almost burned out and it was appalling to think that he faced the possibility of being in darkness ere long, with a wild beast close at hand.

Again came the growl. It echoed and re-echoed hollowly in the cave till the frightened lad appeared to be menaced from all directions.

"It must be a bear, or some wild beast just as bad," thought Raynor.

The growling was repeated, but now it appeared to be retreating from him. Plucking up courage, after a while, Raynor, waving his torch, pushed forward again. He came to a place where

it was necessary to scramble up to a sort of platform considerably higher than the path he had been traversing.

As he gained this, he saw several tiny bright lights in front of him.

"Hurrah! It's the stars!" he cried aloud.

"The—s-t-a-r-s!" the echoes boomed back.

At almost the same instant Raynor saw, in front of him, what looked like two balls of livid green flame.

But the boy knew that they were the eyes of whatever beast it was that had sent its growls echoing fearfully through the cave.

CHAPTER XVI.

A "GHOSTESS" ABROAD.

Suddenly, like an inspiration, Jack thought of a way in which he might free his captive hands. Naturally quick-witted, the emergency he found himself facing had made his mind more active than usual.

"That grindstone," he thought. "I can work the treadle with my foot, while I stand backward to it. If I hold the rope against the sharp edge of the stone it ought to cut through in a very short time."

It was quite a task to locate the grindstone in the darkness without making a noise. But at last Jack, by dint of feeling softly along the walls, located it. Then he turned his back to the machine and put his foot on the treadle. As the wheel began to turn he pressed the rope that

bound his hands against the rough stone. In ten minutes he was free.

"Now for the next move," counseled the boy. "I've got to do whatever I decide upon quickly. If I don't escape, and that gang finds how I've freed my wrists, they'll shackle me hand and foot, and I'll not get another chance to get away. If it was only daylight I'd stand a much better opportunity of getting out."

There was the door, but to try that was out of the question. Jack had heard it locked and the key turned. The window? It was too small for a big, well-grown boy like Jack to creep through. He had noted that during the time the door was open and his prison was lighted by the rays of the lantern.

"There's that fireplace," thought the boy, "that's about the last resort. I wonder——"

He located the big, old-fashioned chimney, built of rough stones and full of nooks and crannies, without trouble. Getting inside it on the

hearthstone he looked upward; it was open to the sky and at the top he could see a faint glow.

"It's getting daylight," he exclaimed to himself.

The next moment he noticed that right across the top of the chimney was the stout branch of a tree.

"If I could get up the chimney that branch would afford me a way of getting to the ground," he thought.

"By Jove! I believe I could do it," he muttered, as the light grew stronger and he saw how roughly the interior of the chimney was built. "It's not very high, and those rough stones make a regular ladder."

As time was pressing, Jack began the ascent at once. For a lad as active as he was, it proved even more easy than he had anticipated. But long before he reached the top he was covered from head to foot with soot, although, oddly enough, that thought never occurred to him. At

length, black as a negro in mourning, he reached the top of the chimney and grasped the tree branch he had noticed from below.

He swung into it and made his way to the main trunk of the tree, an ancient elm. It was no trick at all then for him to slide to the ground. Then, silently as a cat, he tiptoed his way from the old stone house, with its occupants sleeping and snoring, blissfully unaware that Jack had stolen a march on them.

"Well, things have gone finely so far," he mused. "Now, what shall be the next step?"

He looked about him. The country was a wild one. There was no sign of a house, and, as far as he could see, there was nothing but an expanse of timber and rocks.

"This is a tough problem," thought the boy. "I've no idea where I am, or the points of the compass. If I go one way, I might come out all right, but then again I might find myself lost in the forest. Hanged if I know what to do."

But, realizing that it would not do to waste any time around the old house, Jack at length struck off down what appeared to have been, in bygone days, some sort of a wood road. It wound for quite a distance among the trees, but suddenly, to his huge delight, the boy beheld in front of him the broad white ribbon of a dusty highway.

Suddenly, too, he heard the sound of wheels and the rattle of a horse's hoofs coming along at a smart rate.

"Good; now I can soon find out where I am," thought the boy, and he hurried forward to meet the approaching vehicle. It contained a pretty young woman, wearing a sunbonnet.

Jack had no hat to lift, but he made his best bow as the fair driver came abreast of him.

"I beg your pardon," he began, "but could you tell me——"

The young woman gave one piercing scream.

"Oh-h-h-h-h-h!" she cried, and gave her horse

a lash with the whip that made it leap forward like an arrow. In a flash she was out of sight in a cloud of dust.

"Well, what do you know about that?" exclaimed Jack. "She must be crazy, or something, or else she's the most bashful girl I ever saw."

He sat down on a rock at the side of the road to rest and waited for another rig or a foot passenger to come by. Before long he heard a sprightly whistle, and a barefooted boy, carrying a tin pail, and with a fish pole over his shoulder, appeared round a curve in the road.

"Now, I'll get sailing directions," said Jack to himself, and then, as the boy drew near:

"Hullo, sonny! Can you tell me——"

The boy gave one look and then, dropping his can of bait, and his pole, fled with a howl of dismay.

"Hi! Stop, can't you? What's the matter with you?" shouted Jack. He ran after the boy

at top speed. But the faster he ran the faster the youngster sped along the road.

"Oh-h-h-h-h! Help! Mum-muh!" he yelled, as he ran, in terrified tones.

At length Jack gave up the chase. He leaned against a fence and gave way to his indignation.

"Bother it all," he said. "What can be the matter with these people? Everyone I speak to runs away from me, as if I had the plague or something. Anyhow, that youngster can't be very far down this road. I guess I'll keep right on after him, and then I'm bound to come to some place where there are some sensible folks."

As he assumed, it was not long before he came in sight of a neat little farm-house, standing back from the road in a grove of fine trees. He made his way toward it. In the front yard an old man was trimming rose-bushes.

"Can you tell me——" began Jack.

The old man looked up. Then uttering an appalling screech, he ran for his life into the house.

"Mandy! Mandy! Thar be a ghostess in the yard!" he yelled, as he ran.

Jack looked after him blankly. What could be the matter?

CHAPTER XVII.

ONE MYSTERY SOLVED.

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" exclaimed Jack. "What *can* be the matter? It beats me. I——"

"Hey you, git out of thar. I don't know what of critter ye be, but you scared my old man nigh ter death. Scat now, er I'll shoot!"

Jack looked up toward an upper window of the farm-house, from which the voice, a high-pitched, feminine one, had proceeded. An old lady, with a determined face, stood framed in the embrasure. In her hands, and pointed straight at the mystified Jack, she held an ancient but murderous looking blunderbuss.

"It's loaded with slugs an' screws, an' brass tacks," pleasantly observed the old lady. "Jerushiah!" this to someone within the room, "stop

that whimperin'. I'm goin' ter send it on its way, ghost or no ghost."

"But, madam——" stammered Jack.

"Don't madam me," was the angry reply. "Git now, and git quick!"

"This is like a bad dream," murmured Jack, but there was no choice for him but to turn and go; "maybe it is a dream. If it is I wish I could wake up."

He turned into the hot, dusty road once more. He felt faint and hungry. His mouth was dry, and he suffered from thirst, too. Before long he found a chance to slake this latter. A cool, clear stream, spanned by a rustic bridge, appeared as he trudged round a bend in the road.

"Ah, that looks good to me," thought Jack, and he hurried down the bank as fast as he could.

He bent over the stream at a place where an eddy made an almost still pool, as clear as crystal. But no sooner did his face approach the water than he gave a violent start. A hideous black

countenance gazed up at him. Then, suddenly, Jack broke into a roar of laughter.

"Jerusalem! No wonder everybody was scared at me when I scare myself!" he exclaimed. "It's the soot from that chimney. Just think, it never occurred to me why they were all so alarmed at my appearance. Why, I'd make a locomotive shy off the track if it saw me coming along."

It did not take Jack long to clean up, and, while his face was still grimy when he had finished, it was not, at least, such a startling looking countenance as he had presented to those from whom he sought to find his way back to Musky Bay.

"Now that I look more presentable I guess I'll try and get some breakfast," thought the boy as, his thirst appeased, he scrambled up the bank again.

About half a mile farther along the road was the queerest-looking house Jack had ever seen. It was circular in form, and looked like three

giant cheese-boxes, perched one on the top of the other, with the smallest at the top.

"Well, whoever lives there must be a crank," thought Jack; "but still, since I've money to pay for my breakfast, even a crank won't drive me away, I guess."

A man was sawing wood in the back yard and to him Jack addressed himself.

"I'd like to know if I can buy a meal here?" he said.

"No, you can't fry no eel here," said the man, and went on sawing.

"I didn't say anything about frying eels. I said 'Can I get a meal?' " shouted Jack, who now saw that the man was somewhat deaf.

"Don't see it makes no difference to you how I feel," rejoined the man.

"I'm hungry. I want to eat. I can pay," bellowed Jack.

"What's that about yer feet?" asked the deaf man.

"Not feet—eat—E-A-T. I want to eat," fairly yelled Jack.

"What do you mean by calling me a beat?" angrily rejoined the deaf man.

"I didn't. Oh, Great Scott, everything is going wrong to-day," cried Jack. Then he cupped his hands and fairly screeched in the man's ear.

"Can I buy a meal here?"

A light of understanding broke over the other's face.

"Surely you can," he said. "Araminta—that's my wife—'ull fix up a bite fer yer. Why didn't you say what you wanted in the fust place?"

"I did," howled Jack, crimson in the face by this time; "but you didn't hear me. You are deaf."

"Wa'al, I may be a *little* hard o' hearing, young feller," admitted the man, "but I hain't deef by a dum sight."

Jack didn't argue the point, but followed him to the house, where a pleasant-faced woman soon

prepared a piping hot breakfast. As he ate and drank, Jack inquired the way to Musky Bay.

"It ain't far," the woman told him, "five miles or so."

"Can I get anyone to drive me back there?" asked Jack, who was pretty well tired out by this time.

"Oh, yes; Abner will drive you over fer a couple of dollars.

She hurried out to tell her husband to hitch up. Jack could hear her shouting her directions in the yard.

"All right. No need uv speaking so loud. I kin hear ye," Jack could hear the deaf man shouting back. "I kin hear ye."

"Just think," said the woman when she came back into the kitchen, where Jack had eaten, "Abner won't admit he's deef one bit. At church on Sundays he listens to the sermon just as if he understood it. If anyone asks him what it was about, he'll tell 'um that he doesn't care to

discuss the new minister, but he's not such a powerful exhorter as the old one. He's mighty artful, is Abner."

The rig was soon ready and Jack was on his homeward way. To his annoyance, Abner proved very talkative and required answers to all his remarks.

"Gracious, I'll have no lungs left if I have to shout this way all the way home," thought Jack. "It'll be Husky Bay. If ever I drive with Abner again, I'll bring along some cough lozenges."

"Must be pretty tough to be really, down-right deef," remarked Abner, after Jack had roared out answers to him for a mile and a half.

"It must be," yelled Jack.

"Yes, sir-ee," rejoined Abner, wagging his head. "I'm just a trifle that er-way, and it bothers me quite a bit sometimes, 'specially in damp weather. Gid-ap!"

While Billy stood there hesitating, the creature gave another of its alarming growls.—*Page* 133.

CHAPTER XVIII.

BILL SNIGGERS DECIDES.

We left Billy Raynor in a most unpleasant position. With escape from the cave within his grasp the way was blocked, it will be recalled, by some wild beast, the nature of which Billy did not know. His torch, made from the withered bush that was responsible for his dilemma, was burning low. Just in front of him glowed two luminous green eyes.

While Billy stood there hesitating, the creature gave another of its alarming growls. Hardly thinking what he was doing, Billy, startled by a shrill caterwaul, which followed the growl, flung his lighted torch full at the eyes, and heard a screech that sounded as if his blazing missile had struck its mark.

There was a swift patter of feet and the eyes vanished.

"Great Christmas, I've scared the creature off," said Billy to himself, with a sigh of relief; "a lucky thing I had that torch."

He walked forward more boldly. The evident alarm of the animal that had scared him, when the torch struck, convinced the boy that there was no more danger to be feared from it. In a few seconds more he was out in the open air and on a hillside.

It was still pitch dark, but the stars seemed to be growing fainter. Billy drew out his watch and, striking a match, looked at it. The hands pointed to three-thirty.

"It will be daylight before long," thought Billy. "If I start walking now I will only lose myself. I'll wait till it gets light and then try to get my bearings."

Never had dawn come so slowly as did that that one, in the opinion of the tired and impa-

tient lad. But at last the eastern sky grew faintly gray and then flushed red, and another day was born. In the growing light, Billy stood up and looked about him. The bay or any familiar landmarks were not in sight. Billy was in a quandary. But before long he came to a decision.

"I'll strike out for a main road," he decided; "if I can find one, that will bring me to where I can get some information, at any rate."

With this end in view, he scrambled down the hillside and found himself in some fields. After a half-hour's walk across these, he saw, with delight, that he had not miscalculated his direction. A road lay just beyond a brush hedge.

Billy made his way through a gap and struck off, in what he was tolerably sure was the way to Musky Bay. If he had but known it, however, he was proceding in an exactly opposite direction. He had walked about a mile when another foot passenger hove in sight.

The lad was glad of this at first, for, although

he had walked some distance, he had not passed a house, nor had any vehicles come by. But a second glance at the man who was coming toward him made him by no means so pleased at his appearance. The other foot passenger was a heavily built man with a lowering brow. He wore clothes that savored of a nautical character.

"Hullo, there, young feller," he said, as he halted to allow Billy to come up to him.

"Good morning," said Billy. "I am trying to find my way to Musky Bay. Can you direct me?"

The other looked at the boy with a glance of quick suspicion. "Livin' there?" he asked.

"Yes, that is to say, I'm staying there with friends."

"Umph! I know a crowd of folks there. Who you stopping with?"

Before Billy realized what he was saying he had made a fatal slip.

"With Captain Simms—that is," he hurried on, in an effort to correct his blunder, "I——"

"Know a kid named Ready—Jack Ready?"

"Why, yes, he's my best friend. He—here, what's the matter?"

The other had suddenly drawn a pistol and held it pointed unwaveringly at Billy.

"Jerk up yer hands, boy, and get 'em up quick!" he snarled.

Billy had no recourse but to obey. The man facing him was a hard-looking enough character to commit any crime. With a sudden pang Billy recalled that he was wearing the handsome watch —one of which had been given both to Jack and himself for services they had performed for a high official in Holland, when they rescued the latter's wife and daughter from robbers who had held up the ladies' automobile.

He saw the man's eyes fixed on the chain with a greedy glare. "Hand over that watch," he ordered.

Billy did as he was told. Then came another order while the pistol was pointed unwaveringly at him.

"Now come across with your cash."

Billy handed over what money he possessed—about fifteen dollars. The rest was in a New York bank, and some in a safe at the hotel.

The man looked at the inscription on the watch.

"William Raynor, eh? Your friend was talking about you just before we had to——"

All his fear was forgotten as the man spoke. His tones were sinister. Billy realized, like a flash, that this man was an ally of the Judsons, and must have had a hand in Jack's disappearance.

"Had to what?" Billy demanded. "You don't mean that you committed any act of violence?"

"Well, I'm not sayin' as to that," rejoined the other, who, as our readers will have guessed, was Bill Sniggers, "you'll find out soon enough."

The man was deliberately torturing Billy.

Soon after Jack's escape, Judson had awakened, and had been the first to discover that the boy had got away. A hasty and angry consultation followed, and it had been decided to send Bill, who was not known by sight in the vicinity, out to scout and see if the hunt for the missing boy was up. His astonishment at running into Billy was great. At first, till the boy spoke of Musky Bay, Bill, who was an all-around scoundrel, merely regarded him as a favorable object of robbery when he spied his gold watch chain. Now, however, the boy was a source of danger.

"Come over here, and I'll tell you all about it," said Bill. "Oh, you needn't be scared. I won't hurt you. I got all I wanted off of you. You see your friend got a little uppish after we carried him off, and so we had—*to hit him this way!*"

The last words were spoken quickly and were accompanied by a terrific blow aimed at Billy's chin. The boy sank in the roadway without a

moan. He lay white and apparently lifeless, while Bill, with a satirical grin on his face, regarded him.

"Well, you won't come to life this little while, young feller," he muttered. "I'll just put you over this hedge for safekeeping, so as you won't attract undue attention, and then be on my way."

He picked the unconscious boy up as if he had been a feather and placed him behind the hedge. Then, with unconcern written on his brutal face, the rascal walked on. He was bound for a neighboring village to get provisions; for, till they knew how the land lay, none of the Judson gang dared to leave the deserted house. Bill, in his rough clothes, would attract little or no attention. But the others were smartly dressed and wore jewelry, and Donald had on yachting clothes. Had they been seen they could not have failed to be noticed in that simple community.

"This must be my lucky day," muttered Bill, as he walked along. "I got my pay for that job

last night, and now I've got a gold watch and chain and fifteen dollars beside. Tell you what, Bill, old-timer, I won't go back to that old house again. I'll just leave that bunch up there, and beat it out of these parts in my motor-boat. That's what I'll do—go, while the goin's good, because I kin smell trouble coming sure as next election."

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT A "HAYSEED" DID.

Billy opened his eyes. His head swam dizzily, and he felt sick and faint. The hot sun was beating down on him, but at first he thought he was at home and in bed. Then he began to remember. He sat up, and then, not without an effort, rose to his feet dizzily.

"Where on earth am I?" he thought. "And what happened? Let's see what time it is."

But his watch pocket was empty, and then full recollection of what had occurred came back to him. He was still rather painfully trying to regain the road when he heard the sound of a voice. It was a very loud voice, even though the owner of it was not yet in sight.

"Looks like we might have rain. I said it looks like we might have a shower."

Then another voice—a boyish one—shouted back:

"YES—IT—DOES."

"Gid-ap," came in the first voice, and then came hoof-beats and the rumble of wheels. The next minute a ramshackle, two-seated rig, with a man and a boy on the front seat, came into sight. Billy gave one long stare, as one who doubted the evidence of his own eyes. Then he broke into a glad shout:

"Jack!"

"Billy, old fellow, what in the world? Why, you're white as a sheet."

With alarm on his face, Jack sprang out, as Abner stopped the rig, and rushed toward Billy.

"How did you get here? What has happened?" demanded Jack.

Billy told his story in as few words as possible.

"Oh, the rascal," broke out Jack, when Billy described the hold-up. "That was Bill Sniggers.

He's the man who led the way to the stone house —but get in and I'll tell you my story as we go along."

"Where are you going?"

"Back to Musky Bay; but a few hours ago I didn't think I'd ever see it again."

Jack had to shout both his story and Billy's for Abner's benefit. But he gave them in highly condensed versions, as his sorely taxed vocal organs had almost reached the limit of their strength. He had just reached the conclusion, having been interrupted several times by Abner's exclamations, when, ahead of them, on the road, they spied a figure shuffling along in the dust. The two boys were on the rear seat of the rig, so that the man, when he saw the rig approaching, having turned his head at the sound of hoofs, did not see the boys.

"Reckon that feller means ter ask fer a ride," remarked Abner, as a bend in the road ahead screened the man from view for a few minutes.

A sudden idea had come into Jack's head.

"Let him have it," he said; "and then drive to the nearest village and up to the police station. I'll pay you well for it."

"But—but—who is he?" demanded Abner, stopping his horse.

"Bill Sniggers, the rascal who is in league with Judson."

"Great hemlock! You bet I'll pick him up right smart. But he'll see you boys and scare."

"No, we'll hide in here," and Jack raised a leather flap that hung from the back seat. It will be a tight fit, but there'll be room."

"Wa'al, if that don't beat all," said Abner. "Git in thar, then, and then the show kin go on."

As Jack had said, it was a "tight fit" in the recess under the seat, but, as Abner's rig had been made to take produce to market, there was a sort of extension at the back, which gave far more room than would ordinarily have been the case. Pretty soon the boys, in their hiding-place, felt

the rig come to a stop. Then came a voice both recognized as Bill's.

"Say, gimme a ride, will yer?"

"Did ye say my harness was untied?"

"No, I said gimme a ride," roared Bill, at the top of his powerful lungs.

"Oh, all right. Git in. Whoa thar', consarn yer (this to the horse). Whar yer goin'?"

"Nearest village. I'm campin' up the bay. I want to get some grub," shouted Bill.

"Yer a long ways frum ther river," remarked Abner.

"Maybe; but I reckon that ain't your business," growled Bill.

"Not ef you don't want ter tell it, 'tain't," said Abner apologetically. He had heard enough of Bill's character not to argue with him.

"That's a nice-looking watch you've got there," the boys heard Abner say pleasantly.

There was a pause and then Bill roared out:

"What's that to you if it is?"

"Oh, nothing, only I jest saw that printing on it, and calkilated it might have bin a present to yer."

Jack could almost see Bill hurriedly thrusting the watch back into his pocket. Then, after a little while, he spoke again.

"Didn't see nothing of a kid back there in the road, did yer?"

"He means you, Billy," whispered Jack.

"No, I didn't see nothing of nobody," was Abner's comprehensive rejoinder.

There was a long silence, during which the boys sweltered in their close confinement. But they would have gone through more than that for the sake of what they hoped to bring about—the apprehension of at least one of Judson's aides.

"Getting near a village?" asked Bill presently.

"Yep; 'bout half a mile more," rejoined Abner.

In a short time the rig began to slacken its pace. Then it stopped.

"Here, what's this?" the boys heard Bill exclaim. "You're stopping in front of a police station."

"Sure. The chief is Araminta's—that's my wife—cousin. I'm goin' in ter see him a minit. Hold the horse, will yer, he's a bit skittish."

The boys heard Abner get out, and then an eternity seemed to elapse. Then a door banged and a sharp voice snapped out:

"Throw up your hands, gol ding yer. I'm the chief uv perlice, an' I arrest ye fer ther robbery of one gold watch and assault and batt'ry."

"Confound it, the old hayseed led me into a trap!" exclaimed Bill.

He threw himself out of the rig and started to run. But, as he did so, Jack and Billy, who had crawled out from the back, suddenly appeared. Bill gave a wild shout, and the next instant he was sprawling headlong in the dusty street, while a crowd came rushing from all directions.

Jack had tripped him by an old football trick.

With an oath the desperado reached for his revolver. But, before he could reach it, he was pinioned by a dozen pairs of hands, and marched, struggling and swearing, into the police station.

He was searched, and Billy's watch found on him, as well as the money. Then he was locked up. He refused to give any information about the Judsons, in which he showed his astuteness, for, if they had been caught, his plight would have been worse than it was, for they would have been certain to implicate him deeply. So he contented himself by saying that he knew nothing about them. They had hired him to help the elder Judson recover his nephew from another uncle, who had treated him badly. He knew nothing more about the case, he declared, except that, after Jack's escape, the Judsons had left for New York. (It may be said here that he was eventually found guilty of the theft and the assault and received a jail sentence.)

Abner was well rewarded for the clever way

he had brought about Bill's capture; and, well pleased with the way everything had come out, the boys resumed their journey.

"I hope Abner will invest part of what I gave him in an ear-trumpet," said Jack, as they entered Musky Bay.

"I hope so," laughed Billy. He was going to add something, but a shout stopped him.

"There's Captain Simms and Noddy," shouted Jack, as the two came running toward the vehicle. There is no need to go into the details of the reunion, or to relate what anxious hours the captain and Noddy had gone through after their discovery that the boys had vanished. If they had not reappeared when they did, Captain Simms was preparing to organize posses and make a wide search for them, as well as enlisting the aid of the authorities. In the vague hope that the Judsons and Jarrow might have remained in the stone house, waiting Bill's return, a party searched it next day, under the guidance of a

native who knew the trail to it. But it was empty. A search for the black motor boat, too, resulted in nothing being found of her.

As a matter of fact, not many minutes after Bill, from whom they wished to be separated, had left the house, the Judsons—father and son—and Jarrow, had made all speed to the point where the motor craft had been left and had hastily made off in her. They knew that the search for Jack would be hot and wished to get as far away from Bill as he treacherously wished to get from them. In their case there was certainly none of the proverbial honor among thieves.

The black motor boat was left at Clayton and afterward claimed by a relative of Bill, who, by reason of "circumstances over which he had no control," was unable to claim her himself. As for the Judsons, they vanished, leaving no trace behind them. The same was the case with Jarrow.

A message had been sent to Uncle Toby, telling him of the reason for the boys' delay at Musky Bay, *via* a small mail steamer that plied those waters. His reply was characteristic:

"Them buoys is as hard to hurt as gotes, and as tuff as ship's biskit on a Cape Horner. Best wishes to awl. Awl well here at eight bells.

"CAP'N TOBY READY,

"Inventor and Patentee of the Universal Herb Medicine, Guaranteed to Cure All Ills, Both of Man and Quadruped."

CHAPTER XX.

THE "CURLEW" IN TROUBLE.

"Looks as if we might have a blow, Jack."

The *Curlew* was lazily moving along, with all sail set, carrying the boys back to Pine Island from their adventurous visit to Musky Bay. But, although every bit of canvas was stretched on her spars, she hardly moved. Her form was reflected in the smooth water with almost mirror-like accuracy.

"A blow? Pshaw," scoffed Noddy, "there isn't a breath of wind. I wish we could get a blow and cool off."

"Well, your wish is likely to come true before very long," said Jack, who was at the tiller.

"How's that?"

"See that cloud bank over yonder, that ragged one?"

"Yes, what's that got to do with it?"

"Well, that's as full of wind as an auto tire," said Jack. "I've been watching it for some time. It'll be a nasty storm when it hits us."

"Hadn't we better run in for shelter somewhere?" asked Billy.

"There's so little wind now that I doubt if we could get inshore before the squall hits us," replied Jack. "I'll try to, though."

He headed for the distant shore, where the outlines of some sort of a wooden structure could be seen.

"If it gets very bad we can take refuge there," he said.

"That's so. I've no great fancy for getting wet," said Billy.

"Nor have I. We've had enough experiences of late to last us a long time," laughed Jack.

"And I was left out of every one of them," grumbled Noddy.

"For which you ought to be duly thankful," said Billy.

"Yes, I didn't enjoy that stone house much, or the soot," declared Jack.

"That cave didn't make much of a hit with me, either," said Billy. "My, those green eyes gave me a scare. I thought it was a bear or a mountain lion, sure; but they say there aren't any such animals in this part of the country."

"Abner said it must have been a lynx," said Jack.

"That being the case, you should have cuffed it," chuckled Noddy.

For the time being he escaped punishment for perpetrating this alleged pun, for the wind began to freshen and the *Curlew* slid through the water like a thing of life. The shore drew rapidly nearer.

But the cloud curtain spread with astonishing rapidity, till the whole sky was covered. The water turned from green to a dull leaden hue.

Puffs of wind came with great velocity, heeling over the *Curfew* till the foam creamed in her lee scuppers.

The wind moaned in a queer, eerie sort of way, that bespoke the coming of a storm of more than ordinary severity. Jack was a prey to some anxiety as he held the *Curlew* on her course. If they could not make the dock he was aiming for before the storm struck, there might be serious consequences.

But, to his great relief, they reached the wharf, a tumble-down affair, before the tempest broke. The *Curlew* was made "snug," and this had hardly been done before a mighty gust of wind, followed by a blanket of rain, tore through the air.

"Just in time, boys," said Jack, as they set out on the run for the structure which they had observed from the water. On closer view it turned out to be nothing more than a barn, not in any too good repair, but still it offered a shelter.

The boys reached it just as a terrific blast of wind swept across the bay, roughening it with multitudinous whitecaps. A torrent of rain blotted out distances at the same time and turned all the world in their vicinity into a driving white cloud.

The barn proved to be even more rickety than its outside had indicated. The door was gone and its windows were broken out. But at least it was pleasanter under a roof than it would have been out in the open. The rain, driven by the furious wind, penetrated the rotten, sun-dried shingles and pattered on the earthen floor, but the boys found a dry place in one corner, where there was a pile of hay.

As the storm increased in fury the clouds began to blot out the daylight. It grew as dark as night almost. The roar of the rain was like the voice of a giant cataract.

"We may have to stay here all night," said Billy, after a long silence.

"That's true," rejoined Jack. "It would be foolhardy to take a boat like the *Curlew* out in such a storm."

Suddenly there came a terrific flash of lightning, followed by a sharp clap of thunder. It was succeeded by flash after flash, in blinding succession.

"My, this is certainly a snorter," exclaimed Billy, and the others agreed with him.

"We won't forget it in a hurry," said Jack. "I can't recall when I've heard the wind make such a noise."

To add to their alarm, as the fury of the wind increased, the old barn visibly quavered. It seemed to rock back and forth on its foundations. The noise of the wind grew so loud that conversation was presently impossible.

Suddenly there came a fiercer blast than any that had gone before. There was a ripping and rending sound.

"Great Scott! Boys, run for your lives, the old shack is tumbling down," cried Jack.

He had scarcely spoken when what he had anticipated happened. Beams, boards and shingles flew in every direction. There was no time even to think. Acting instinctively, each boy threw himself flat upon the pile of moldy hay.

Noddy, in his terror, burrowed deep into it. The noise that accompanied the dissolution of the old barn was terrific. Each boy felt as if at any moment a huge beam might fall on him and crush his life out. Above it all the wind howled with a note of triumph at its work of destruction.

The boys felt as if the end of the world had come.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE END OF JACK'S HOLIDAY.

Fortunately, otherwise this story might have had a different ending, the barn was lifted almost entirely from its foundations and hurled over on its side. The roof was ripped off like an old hat and hurtled through the tempest to the water's edge.

None of the wreckage and débris struck the crouching boys. But the mere sound was terrifying enough. Even Jack was cowed by the tremendous force of the elements. Each lad felt as if the next moment would be his last.

But at last Jack mustered up courage and looked up. The beating rain, which had already soaked them all through, stung his face like hailstones.

"Hullo, fellows," he exclaimed, "is—is anybody hurt?"

"All right here," rejoined Billy. "But say, wasn't that the limit?"

"It sure was," agreed Jack. "At one time I thought we were goners, and——"

"Goo-oof-g-r-r-r-r-r!" An extraordinary sound, which can only be typographically rendered in this manner, suddenly interrupted him.

"Heavens, what's that?" gasped Billy, looking about him in a rather alarmed manner.

"Ugh-ugh-groof-f-f-f-f-f-f!"

"It's Noddy!" cried Jack.

"Gracious, he must be dying," gasped Billy.

In his eagerness to escape the full fury of the storm and the flying wreckage of the barn, Noddy had plunged into the hay with his mouth open, and now his throat was full of the dry stuff. He was almost choked.

"Pull him out," directed Jack, and he and Billy laid hold of Noddy's heels and dragged him out

of the hay-pile. The lad was almost black in the face.

"Ug-gug-groo-o-o-o-o-o!" he mumbled, making frantic gestures with his arms.

"Goodness, this is as bad as the time he was almost drowned," cried Jack. "Clap him on the back good and hard. That's it."

There were several gulps and struggles, and then Noddy began to cough. But all danger from strangulation had passed, thanks to the heroic efforts of Jack and Billy.

"Phew! I thought I was choked," sputtered Noddy, as soon as he found his voice. "I'd hate to be a horse and have to eat that stuff."

"You are a kind of a horse," said Billy slyly.

"How do you make that out?" demanded Noddy, falling into the trap.

"A donkey," laughed Billy teasingly, but poor Noddy felt too badly after his experience in the hay to retaliate in kind.

After the restoration of Noddy, they began to

survey the situation. All were soaked through, and the rain beat about them unmercifully. But they were thankful to have escaped with their lives. Through the white curtain of rain they could make out the outlines of the *Curlew,* riding at the dock.

"I'm glad to see that," observed Jack. "I was half afraid that she might have broken away."

"Then we *would* have been in a fine fix," said Billy.

"What will we do next?" asked Noddy, removing some fragments of hay from his ears.

"Wait till the clouds roll by," laughed Billy. "I guess that's about the program, isn't it, Jack?"

"Seems to be about all that there is to do," replied Jack; "but it seems to me that the storm is beginning to let up even now. Look in the northwest—it's beginning to get lighter."

"So it is," agreed Billy. "Let's get under that clump of trees yonder till it blows over altogether."

"Say, fellows, if we had a fire now, it would feel pretty good," observed Noddy.

"Well, what's the matter with having one?" asked Jack. "We can get some of those old shingles and tarred posts. They're pretty wet, but we can start the blaze going with dried hay from the bottom of the pile."

"Good for you. Volunteer firemen, get to work," cried Billy.

Soon the boys were carrying the dry hay and such wood as seemed suitable for their purpose to the clump of trees. Jack took some matches from his safe and struck a lucifer after the wood had been properly piled.

It blazed up cheerily. Each lad stripped to his underclothes and their drenched garments were hung in front of the hot fire. The dripping clothes sent up clouds of steam, but it was not long before they were dry enough to put on. By the time this was done the storm had abated. Presently the rain, which did not bother the boys

under the thick clump of trees, ceased altogether. Only in the distance a dull muttering of thunder still went on. A rainbow appeared, delighting them with its brilliant colors.

"Well, that's over," observed Jack, as he dressed. "Now we'll go down and pump out the *Curlew*. I'll bet she's half full of water."

His conjecture proved correct. On their return to their trim little craft they found a foot or more of water in her hull. But this was soon disposed of and, with a brisk breeze favoring them, they set out once more for Pine Island. On their return they found Captain Toby, who had spied them from a distance, awaiting them on the dock.

In his hand he held a yellow envelope. It was a telegram for Jack. The boy eagerly tore it open, and for a moment, as he scanned its contents, his face fell. But almost instantly he brightened.

"Well, what's the news?" demanded his uncle.

"Good and bad," rejoined Jack. "I guess our holiday is over. Billy and I are ordered to join the *Columbia* as soon as we can."

"Hurrah! I was beginning to long for the sea again," declared Billy Raynor.

"I must confess I was, too," said Jack.

"It's a great life for lads—makes men out of them," said Captain Toby. "I must see if I've got two bottles of the Universal Remedy for you boys to take to sea with you," and he hurried off.

Noddy looked rather blue.

"You are lucky fellows—off for more adventures and fun," he said, "while I just stick around."

"Nonsense, you've got your business in New York to attend to, and, as for adventures, I've had plenty of them for a time, haven't you, Billy?"

"A jugful," declared Raynor. "Enough to

last me for the rest of my life-time, and, anyhow, life at sea is mostly hard work."

"That's what makes it worth living," said Jack. "I'll be glad to get down to work again after our long holiday."

"And I really believe I will, too," said Billy; "and on a crack liner like the *Columbia* we may be able to make our marks."

"I hope we will. I mean to work mighty hard, anyhow," said the young wireless man, "but hark, there goes the bell for supper. Hurry up, fellows, I'll race you to the house."

The next day was devoted to saying good-by to the scenes and the people who had helped make up a happy vacation for the lads. Noddy, it was decided, would stay on with Captain Toby for the present, as his presence was not required in New York.

Of course the lads visited Captain Simms. He told them that his holiday also was almost over. The naval code was nearly completed, and he

must get back to Washington within a week or so.

"Well, here's to our next meeting," he said, as he heartily clasped the hands of both lads in farewell.

Under what circumstances that meeting was to occur none of them just then guessed.

CHAPTER XXII.

"THE GEM OF THE OCEAN."

The *Columbia,* a magnificent and imposing vessel of more than 20,000 tons burden, lay at her New York dock two weeks later. Within her steel sides, besides the usual cabin accommodations, she had swimming pools, Roman courts, palm gardens and even a theater. Elevators conveyed her passengers from deck to deck. The new vessel of the Jukes shipping interests was the last word in shipbuilding, and from her stern flew the Stars and Stripes.

It was sailing day. From the three immense black funnels smoke was rolling. Steam issued, roaring from the escape pipes. The dock buzzed and fermented with a great crowd assembled to see their friends off on the first voyage of the great ship. Wagons, taxicabs and autos blocked

the street in front of the docks. Photographers and reporters swarmed everywhere. The confusion was tremendous, yet, promptly at the hour set for sailing, the booming siren began to sound, last farewells were shouted, and the invariable late stayer on board made his wild leap for the gangplank before it was drawn in.

A perceptible vibration ran through the monster ship. Her propellers began to churn the water white. A small fleet of tugs helped to swing her against the tide as she slowly backed into the stream. Majestically her monster bulk swung round, her bow pointing seaward. Her maiden voyage had begun.

It is doubtful if among her delighted passengers and proud officers, however, there were any more enthusiastic about the great vessel than two lads who were seated in the wireless operators' cabin on the topmost deck.

"Well, Billy, this is different from the old *Ajax,* eh?"

"Is it? Well, I should say so," responded Billy. "You ought to see the engine-room. You could have put the *Ajax* in it, almost."

"We ought to be proud of our jobs," continued Jack.

"I know I am. It's a great thing to be part of the human machinery of a huge vessel like this, and the best part of it is that she flies the American flag," added Billy enthusiastically.

"I heard that the *Gigantia,* of the London Line, sails to-day, too. By Jove, there she comes now."

He pointed out of the open door back up the river. The great British steamer, till then the biggest thing on the ocean, was backing out. Her four red-and-black funnels loomed up imposingly above her black hull.

"Then we'll have a race for certain," said Billy, his eyes dilating with excitement; "good for us, but my money goes on the *Columbia.*"

"That Britisher can travel, though," said Jack.

"Oh, we won't have an easy time of it, but I'll bet my shirt we'll win the blue ribbon of the ocean."

"I hope so," rejoined Jack with a smile at the other's enthusiasm. "But what do you think of my quarters, Billy?"

"Why, they're fit for a king or a millionaire," laughed Raynor. "I'll bet you never thought, when you were in that little rabbit hutch of a wireless room on the old *Ajax,* that some day you'd be traveling in such style?"

Raynor's eyes wandered to the instrument table, with its array of the most up-to-date wireless apparatus.

"Hullo! What's that thing?" he asked suddenly, pointing to a device that looked unfamiliar. It was a box-shaped arrangement, metal, with complicated wires strung to it and had a "telephone" receiver attached to it with a band to hold it securely to the operator's head.

"Oh, that's an invention of my own that I'm

trying out," said Jack. "I don't just know what success I'll have with it. I haven't really put it to the test yet."

"What do you call it?"

"The Universal Detector," replied Jack.

"Just what is that?"

"Well, at present you know a ship can only receive wireless messages from a ship that is 'in tune' with her own radio apparatus. The Universal Detector should make it possible to catch every wireless sound. I am very anxious, if I perfect it, to get it adopted in the navy. It would be of great value in time of war, for by its use every message sent by an enemy, even if they were purposely put 'out of tune,' could be caught."

"By the way, speaking of the navy, did you hear from Captain Simms?"

"Yes; he is still up at Musky Bay. Some difficulties in the code have arisen, and he will not be

through with his work for two weeks or more yet, he says."

"No more attempts to steal his work, or to spy on him?"

"He doesn't mention any. I guess we're through with the Judson crowd."

"Looks that way. What a gang of thorough-paced rascals they were."

"I guess Judson's business must be in a bad way to make him take such desperate chances to recoup by landing that contract."

"I suppose that's it."

Raynor lifted his eyes to the ship's clock above Jack's operating instruments.

"By Jove, almost eight bells! I've got to go on watch. This is my first job as second engineer, and I mean to keep things on the jump. Well, so long, old fellow."

"See you this evening," said Jack, as Raynor hurried off.

Jack soon became very busy. The air was full

of all sorts of messages. Besides that, his cabin was crowded with men and women who wished to file last messages to those they left behind them. He worked steadily through the afternoon, catching meteorological radios as well as information from other steamers scattered along the Atlantic lane.

He knew that he might expect hard work and plenty of it all that day. There would be no chance for him to experiment with his Universal Detector. About dusk, Harvey Thurman, his assistant, came into the wireless room to relieve him while he went to dinner.

Thurman was a short, thick-set young man, with a flabby, pallid face and shifty eyes. He had got his job on the new liner through a "pull" that he possessed through a distant relationship with Mr. Jukes. Jack had not met him before, and, since they had been on board, they had exchanged only a few words, but he instinctively

felt that he and Thurman were not going to make very good shipmates.

As Jack relinquished the head-receivers and the key to his "relief," Thurman's gaze rested on the Universal Detector.

"What's that?" he demanded.

"Oh, just a little idea I'm working on," said Jack, "a new invention. If I can perfect it, it may be valuable."

"Yes, but what is it? What's it for?" persisted Thurman.

Jack explained what he hoped to accomplish with the instrument, and an instant later was sorry he had done so, for he noticed an expression of cupidity creep into Thurman's eyes. The youth persisted in asking a host of questions, and Jack, having started to explain, could not very well refuse to answer. Besides, inventors are notoriously garrulous about their brain children, and Jack, even though he did not like Thurman, soon found himself talking away at a great rate.

"Huh, I don't think the idea's worth a cent," sniffed Thurman contemptuously, when Jack had finished.

"I guess that's where you and I differ," said Jack, controlling his temper with some difficulty, for the sneer in Thurman's voice had been marked. "I'm going to make it a success, and then we shall see."

He left the wireless room, and the instant he was gone Thurman, with a crafty look on his flabby face, eagerly began examining the detector. As he was doing so Jack, who had forgotten his cap, suddenly reëntered the wireless room. Thurman had been so intent on his scrutiny of the detector that he did not hear him.

"You appear to be taking great interest in that useless invention," said Jack in a quiet voice.

Thurman started and spun round. His face turned red and he had an almost guilty look.

"I didn't think you were coming creeping back

like that," he exclaimed, "a fellow would almost think you were spying on him."

"Have you any reason to fear being spied upon?" asked Jack.

"Me? No, not the least. That's a funny question."

"I want to tell you, Thurman, that my invention is not yet completed and therefore, of course, is not patented. I was pretty free with you in describing it, and I shall trust to your honor not to talk about it to anyone."

"Certainly not," blustered Thurman. "I'm not that sort of a chap."

But, after Jack had gone out, he resumed his study of the detector a second time, desisting every time he heard a step outside.

"So it's not patented, eh?" he muttered to himself. "That will help. It's an idea there that ought to be worth a pot of money."

CHAPTER XXIII.

JACK'S BIG SECRET.

The next day Jack found an opportunity to sandwich in some work on his invention between his regular work. The thing fascinated him, and he tried and tested it in a hundred different combinations. Suddenly, just after he had altered two importants units of the device, a new note came to his ears through the "watch-case" receivers that were clamped to his head.

"It's code—somebody sending code!" exclaimed Jack, and then the next instant, "it's some ship of the navy! Hurrah! The detector is working, for they use different wave lengths from the commercial workers, and, if it hadn't been for the Universal Detector, I'd never have been able to listen in at their little talk-fest."

He waited till the code message, a long one

from Washington to the *Idaho,* of the North Atlantic fleet at Guantanamo, Cuba, was finished, and then he could not refrain from "butting in."

"Hello, navy," he chattered with the wireless key, "that was a nice little message you had. How's the weather up your way?"

"Who is this?" demanded the navy wireless in imperious tones.

"Oh, just a fellow who was listening," responded Jack.

"Butting in, you mean. But say, how did you ever get on to our sending? We were using eccentric wave-lengths to keep our talk a secret."

"I'll have to keep how I caught your talk a secret, too, for the present, old man."

"Great Scott! It isn't possible that you've solved the problem of a universal detector. Why, that's a thing the navy sharps have been working on for years."

"I can't say how I caught your message," shot back Jack's radio through space.

"You'll have to tell if the government gets after you," was the reply. "Uncle Sam isn't going to have a fellow running round loose with anything like that."

"What do you mean?"

"That you will be forbidden to use it."

"Is that so?"

"Yes, that's so. I'm going to make out a report for my superiors about it right now. You're pretty fresh."

"Put that in the report, too," chuckled the *Columbia's* wireless disdainfully.

"You'll find it's no joke to monkey with the government," snapped back the naval man.

Jack didn't answer. A message from the *Taurus,* of the Bull Line, was coming in. She had sighted an iceberg, something very unusual at that time of year. Jack hurried the message, which gave latitude and longitude of the menace, to Captain Turner.

"Well, that won't bother us," said that digni-

tary. "We're far to the south of that. Those Bull fellows run to Quebec. Send a radio to Captain Spencer, of the *Taurus,* thanking him for his information."

The great man, the captain of a liner, has literally more power than a king, lit a cigar, and bent his head once more over the problem in navigation he was wrestling with. Jack saluted and hurried back to his quarters.

He was highly elated over the success of his Universal Detector. The threats of the government man did not alarm him, for he did not propose to place his invention on the general market, but to sell it outright to the government, whose secret it would then remain.

He resolved to test it again. A moment after he had put the receivers to his ears, a broad grin came over his face. The air was literally vibrant with the calls of the navy men, flinging their high-powered currents through space.

". . . he's a cheeky beggar, whoever he is, but he's got the goods," was the first he heard.

"Hum, that's Mr. Washington," thought Jack. Then, from some other point came another message.

"Great Scott! Uncle Sam won't let him get away with anything like that."

"I should say not. The Secret Service department is already at work trying to find out who the dickens he is."

"That will be a sweet job," came the naval station at Point Judith.

"Talk about a needle in a haystack," sputtered the U. S. S. *Alabama.*

"Not a patch on it," agreed the great dreadnought *Florida.*

Then came Washington again.

"I'll tell you it's stirred up a fuss here," he said. "I wonder who it can be."

"Maybe that Italian fellow who invented the sliding sounder," suggested the *Florida.*

"Or Pederson, out in Chicago," came from a land station. All the navy men appeared to be joining in the confab.

"Gracious, what a fuss I've stirred up," thought Jack, with a quiet smile. "They'd never guess in a million years that it's a kid of an operator who's causing all the trouble."

"No; both the men you mentioned are in Europe," declared Washington. "The department's been trailing them since they got my news."

"Well, the wireless men are going to be a happy hunting ground for the Secret Service fellows for this one little while," chuckled the *Florida.*

"Wonder if he's listening now?" struck in the *North Dakota,* which had not yet talked.

"Shouldn't wonder," remarked the *Idaho.*

Jack pressed down his key and the spark began to flash and crackle.

"You fellows are having a grand old pow-

wow," he said. "Sorry I can't give you any information. I know you're dying of curiosity."

"You've got your nerve, I must say," sputtered Washington indignantly. "Have you been listening right along?"

"Yes; that Secret Service hunt is going to be very interesting."

"It won't be very interesting for you, whoever you are, when they get you," thundered the mighty *Florida*. "It's bad business monkeying with Uncle Sam."

"Maybe they won't get me," suggested Jack's spark.

"Oh, yes, they will," came from Washington, "and you'll find it doesn't pay to be as sassy as you've been."

"M-M-M," sent out Jack mischievously.

The three letters mean, in telegraphers' and wireless men's language, "laughter."

Washington's dignity took fire at this gross insult. They must have sizzled as from the

national capital an angry message shot out to the other ships to talk in code. Jack's fun was over, but he had thoroughly enjoyed all the excitement he had stirred up. As he laid down the receivers Raynor came in.

"You look tickled to death over something," he exclaimed. "What's up?"

Jack sprang to his feet. His eyes were shining. He clasped Raynor's hand and wrung it pump-handle fashion. Raynor looked at the usually quiet, rather self-contained lad, in blank astonishment.

"What's happened—somebody wirelessed you that you're heir to a million?" he demanded.

"No, better than that, Billy."

"Great Scott! Tell me."

"Billy, old boy, it works. It works like a charm. I've got half the navy all snarled up about it now. By to-morrow they'll be after me with Secret Service men."

"Gee whillakers. You've done the trick! Good for you, old boy."

A sudden shadow in the open door made them both look round. Thurman stood in the embrasure.

"May I add my congratulations?" he said, holding out his hand.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE NAVY DEPARTMENT "SITS UP."

Jack could not refuse the proffered hand. But he took it with an uneasy air. There was something not quite "straight" about Thurman, it seemed to Jack, but as the former offered his congratulations he appeared sincere enough.

"After all, it may be just his misfortune that he can't look you in the eyes," Jack told himself.

But if he had been in the wireless room that night he would have deemed his suspicions only too well founded. Thurman busied himself with routine matters till he was sure Jack was asleep. Then he began calling Washington with monotonous regularity.

An irritable operator answered him. By the wave length the Washington man knew that it was not a naval station or vessel calling.

"Yes—yes—what—is—it?" he snapped.

"I know the fellow who has that Universal Detector."

"What!" The other man, hundreds of miles away, almost fell out of his chair. Recovering himself, he shot out another message:

"Who is this?"

"Never mind that, just for the present."

"Say, you're not that fresh fellow himself talking just to kid us, are you?"

"No, I'm far from joking. I expect to make some money out of this."

"A reward?"

"That's the idea."

"Well, there's no doubt but you would get it if you really have the information. The department's been all up in the air ever since that fellow butted in."

"Are you going to report this conversation?"

"Most assuredly."

"Don't forget that I demand a substantial reward for the information."

"I won't. When will you call me again?"

"About this time to-morrow night."

"All right, then. Good-by."

Thurman took the receiver from his head with a slow smile of satisfaction.

"I guess that will cook that fresh kid's goose," he said. "It's a mean thing to do, maybe, but I need the money, and I'm glad to get a chance to set him down a peg or two."

Thurman could hardly wait for the next night to come. During the day Jack had been having some more fun with the navy men, driving them almost wild. When Thurman finally got Washington, therefore, everything in the government's big wireless station was at fever heat. A high official of the navy sat by the operator, waiting for Thurman's promised call to come out of space.

Men of the Secret Service were scattered about the room as well as department officials. The

air was tense with expectancy. At last Thurman's message came.

His first question was about the reward.

"Tell him he will be liberally rewarded," ordered the naval official. "Tell him to give us the information at once. That fellow has been playing with us all day, and we've been powerless to outwit the Universal Detector, or whatever device it is he uses. The man must be a wizard to have solved a problem that has baffled the keenest minds in the Navy Bureau."

"Reward is assured you," flashed back the naval operator. "Now give us your information. Time is precious."

But Thurman's answer proved disappointing to those in the room.

"Impossible to do so now. Inventor is on the high seas. Will wireless you later when he will return."

"Confound it," grumbled the naval official. "I thought we would have had our hands on the

fellow before daylight. Now it seems we shall have to play a waiting game."

"If the man is on the high seas, it is not unlikely that he is the wireless man on one of the liners," put in Burns, a spare, grizzled man and Chief of the Secret Service.

"That's probable, Burns," rejoined the navy official.

"More than likely, I think," put in another member of the group, "but it's impossible to find out which one."

"Yes, we are at the mercy of our unknown informant," said Burns. "Why the deuce was he so mysterious about it?" He tugged at his gray mustache as a sudden thought struck him.

"Jove!" he exclaimed. "You don't think it's a put-up job to get money out of the government? Put up, I mean, by an agent of the inventor himself."

"I don't know, Burns," was the official's reply. "It's all mighty mysterious. I confess I can't

hazard a guess as to the man's identity. We've looked up all the most prominent wireless sharps all over the country. I am satisfied this fellow is not one of their number."

"Some obscure fellow, I guess," said a Secret Service man.

"Well, he won't remain obscure long," remarked Burns, "if he has brains enough to turn the navy department topsy-turvy for forty-eight hours."

CHAPTER XXV.

A MYSTERY ON BOARD.

Two days later the monotony of the voyage, which was broken only by the radiograms which were posted daily concerning the race between the American and British liners—the *Columbia* being in the lead—was rudely shattered by an incident in which Jack was destined to play an important part. Jack had been on a visit to Raynor during the young engineer's night watch in the engine-room. They had stayed chatting and talking over old times till Jack suddenly realized that it was long after midnight and time for him to be in his bunk.

Hastily saying good-night, he made his way through the deserted corridors of the great ship, which stretched empty and dimly lit before him. As he traversed them the young wireless man

could not but think of the contrast to the busy life of the day when stewards swarmed and passengers hurried to and fro. Now everything was silent and deserted, except for the still figures up on the bridge and below in the engine and fire rooms, guiding and powering the great vessel onward through the night at a twenty-four-knot clip.

The lad had just reached the end of one corridor, and was about to turn into another which led to a companionway, which would bring him to his own domain, when he stopped short, startled by the sound of a single sharp outcry. It came from the corridor he was about to turn into. Jack darted round the corner and almost instantly stumbled over the huddled body of a man lying outside one of the cabin doors.

A dark stain was under his head, and Jack saw at once that the man had been the victim of an attack. At almost the same moment, by the dim light, he recognized the unconscious form

as being that of Joseph Rosenstein, a diamond merchant, so wealthy and famous that he had been pointed out to Jack by the purser as a celebrity.

"Queer fellow," the purser had said. "Won't put his jewels in the safe, although I understand he is carrying three magnificent diamonds with him. Likely to get into trouble if anyone on board knows about it."

"He's taking big chances," agreed Jack, and now here was the proof of his words lying at the boy's feet. Suddenly he recalled having received a message a few days before from New York for the injured man.

"Be very careful. F. is on board," it had read, and Jack interpreted this to be meant as a warning to the diamond merchant. But he did not devote much attention to it just then, except to rouse the sleepy stewards. Within a few minutes the captain and the doctor were on the scene.

"A nasty cut, done with a blackjack or a club," opined Dr. Browning, as he raised the man.

"Is it a mortal wound?" asked the captain. "This is a terrible thing to have happen on my ship."

"I think he'll pull through if no complications set in," said the doctor, and ordered the man removed to his cabin. Suddenly Jack recollected what the purser had said about the diamonds.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said he to the captain, "but I heard that this man carried about valuable diamonds with him. He was probably attacked for purposes of robbery."

"That's right," answered the captain, with a quick look of approval at Jack. "Browning, we'd better examine the contents of his pockets." They did so, but no traces of precious stones could be found.

"Whoever did this, robbed him," declared the captain, with a somber brow, "and the deuce of it is that, unless we can detect him, he will walk

ashore at Southampton or Cherbourg a free man."

The door of the stateroom opposite to which the injured man lay opened suddenly, and a little, wizen-faced man, wearing spectacles, looked out. He appeared startled and shocked as he saw the limp form.

"Good gracious! This is terrible, terrible, captain," he sputtered. "Is—is the man dead?"

"No, Professor Dusenberry, although that does not appear to be the fault of whoever attacked him," was the rejoinder.

"He was attacked, then, for purposes of robbery, do you think?"

"I suspect so."

"Oh, dear, this has so upset me that I shan't sleep the rest of the night," protested the little man, and withdrew into his stateroom.

The next day, naturally, the whole ship buzzed with the news of the night's happenings, and speculation ran rife as to who could have at-

tacked the diamond merchant, who had recovered consciousness and was able to talk. He himself had not the slightest idea of his assailant. He had sat up till late in the smoking saloon, he said, and was coming along the corridor to his stateroom when he was struck down from behind. A black leather wallet, containing three diamonds, which were destined to be sold to the scion of a European royal house, was missing from his pocket, and the loss nearly drove the unfortunate diamond man frantic. He valued the stones at $150,000, so that perhaps his frenzy at losing them was not unnatural.

In the afternoon, Professor Dusenberry, dressed in a frock coat and top hat, although he was at sea and the weather was warm, came into the wireless room. He wanted to send a message, he said, a wireless to London. He was very cautious about inquiring the price and all the details before he sat down to write out his dispatch. When it was completed he handed it to Jack with

his thin fingers, and asked that it be dispatched at once. Then he retreated, or rather faded, from the wireless room. Jack scanned the message with thoughtful eyes. It seemed an odd radiogram for a college professor, such as he had heard Prof. Dusenberry was, to be sending. It read as follows:

"Meet me at three on the granite paving-stones. The weather is fine, but got no specimens. There is no suspicion as you have directed, but I'm afraid wrong."

F.

"Well, that's a fine muddle for somebody to make out when they get it," mused Jack, as he sent out a call for the Fowey Station.

"Must be some sort of a cipher the old fellow is using. He's a dry sort of old stick. Goodness! How scared he was when he saw that man lying outside his door. I thought he was going to faint or something."

"Wonder what sort of a cipher that is," mused

Jack, as he waited for an answer to his call. "Looks to me as if it's one of those numerical ciphers where every second or third or fourth or fifth word is taken from the context and composes a message. Guess I'll try and work it out some time. It'll be something to do. And, hullo, he signs himself 'F'."

Jack looked up at the printed passenger-list that hung before him. "Professor F. Dusenberry" was the last of the "D's"

"His initial," thought Jack, "but it's a funny coincidence that it should be the same as that of the man the diamond merchant was warned to watch out for, and that it should have been the professor's door outside of which he was struck down."

CHAPTER XXVI.

A "FLASH" OF DISTRESS.

Having dispatched the message, Jack sat back in his chair and mused over the future of the Universal Detector. It was a fascinating subject to day-dream over, but his reverie was rudely interrupted by a sharp summons from space.

"Yes—yes—yes," he shot back, "who—is—it?"

"This is the *Oriana,*" came back the reply, "Hamburg for New York. We are in distress."

"What's the trouble?"

The spark crackled and writhed, as Jack's rapid fingers spelled out the message.

"We struck a half submerged derelict and our bow is stove in. We believe we are sinking. This is an S. O. S."

Then followed the position of the craft and another earnest appeal to rush to her aid. Jack

roughly figured out the distances that separated the two ships.

"Will be there in about two hours," he flashed, and then hurried to Captain Turner's cabin with his message.

The captain scanned the message with contracted brow.

"The *Oriana,*" he muttered, "I know her well. Rotten old tramp. We must have full speed ahead. Stand by your wireless, Ready, and tell them we are rushing at top speed to their aid. Confound it, though," he went on, half to himself, "this will lose us the race with the Britisher, but still if we can save the lives of those poor devils I shall be just as well satisfied."

The captain hastened to the bridge to issue his orders and change the big ship's course. Jack went quickly back to his cabin and began flashing out messages of good cheer. About half an hour later Captain Turner came along.

"Any more news, Ready?" he asked.

"No, sir. Their current is getting weak. The last time I had them the operator said that the ship was slowly settling, but that they had the steam pumps going and would keep them working till the water reached the fires. The officers were keeping the firemen at their work with revolvers.

"I've been through such scenes," remarked the captain. "It's part of a seaman's life, but it's an inferno while it lasts."

"Notify me if you hear anything further," said Captain Turner a few moments later.

"Yes, sir. Hullo, here's something coming now. It's the *Borovian,* of the Black Star line. She got that S. O. S. too, and is hurrying to the rescue. But she's far to the south of us."

"Yes, we shall reach the *Oriana* long before she does," said the captain. "By the way, Ready, I've heard that you have quite a reputation for loving adventure."

Jack colored. He did not quite make out what

the captain was "driving at," as the saying is.

"I do like action, yes, sir," he replied.

"Well, then," said Captain Turner, "you've got a little excitement due to you for your prompt action last night in the case of the assault on that diamond merchant. If you want to go on the boats to the *Oriana,* you may do so. Get Thurman to stand by the wireless while you're gone. You can make the time up to him on some other occasion."

Jack's eyes danced. He could hardly express his thanks at the opportunity for a break in the rather monotonous life on shipboard. But the captain had turned on his heel as he finished his speech and left the grateful lad alone.

Thurman was sleeping when Jack roused him. When he learned that Jack was to make one of the boat parties and that he (Thurman) was to remain on duty, the second wireless man's temper flared up.

"That's a fine thing, I must say," he growled.

"You're to go on a junket while I do your work. I won't stand for it."

"Pshaw, Thurman," said Jack pacifically. "I'll do the same for you at any time you say. Besides, I heard you say once you wouldn't like to go in the small boats."

"Think I'm afraid, eh?"

"I said no such thing," retorted Jack, "I——"

"I don't care, you thought it. I'll complain to Captain Turner."

"I would not advise you to."

"Keep your advice to yourself. I've got pull enough to have you fired."

"This line treats its employees too fairly for any such claim as a 'pull' to be advanced."

"You think so, eh? Well, I'll show you. You've been acting like a swelled head all the way over, Ready," said Thurman, forgetting all bounds in his anger. "I'll find a way to fix you——"

"Say, you talk like an angry kid who's been

put out of a ball game," said Jack. "I hope you get over it by the time you come on duty."

An angry snarl was Thurman's only rejoinder as Jack left the wireless operator's sleeping quarters. But the next instant all thought of Thurman was put out of his mind. The lookout had reported from the crow's-nest. On the far horizon a mighty cloud of dark smoke was rising and spreading.

Before many moments had passed it was known that fire—that greatest of sea perils—had been added to the sinking *Oriana's* troubles.

As the news spread through the ship the passengers thronged to the rails. Suppressed excitement ran wild among them. Even Jack found himself unable to stay still as he thought of the lives in peril under that far-off smoke pall. All communication with the stricken ship had ceased, and Jack knew that things must have reached a crisis for her crew.

Then came an order to cast loose four boats,

two on the port and two on the starboard side. Officers and men obeyed with a will. By the time they were ready to be dropped overside, the outlines of the burning steamer were plainly visible. She looked very low in the water. From her midships section smoke, in immense black clouds, was pouring.

But to Jack's surprise no boats surrounded her, as he had expected would be the case. Instead, on her stern, an old-fashioned, high-raised one, he could make out, through his glasses, a huddled mass of human figures. Suddenly one figure detached itself from the rest and Jack saw a pistol raised and aimed at the lower deck. Spurts of smoke from the weapon followed. Thrilled, Jack was about to report what he had seen to the bridge when the third officer, a young man named Billings, came up to him.

"You're in my boat," he said. "Cut along."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A STRANGE WRECK.

"Well, boys, we got here just in time," observed Mr. Billings, as the boat cut through the water.

"I'm not so sure that we have arrived in time to avert a tragedy," said Jack, and he told of the shooting that he had witnessed.

"Probably a mutiny," said Mr. Billings, with the voice of experience. "The crews on those old tramps are the riff-raff of a hundred ports. Bad men to handle in an emergency."

He had hardly finished speaking when, borne toward them on the wind, which was setting from the burning, sinking ship, came a most appalling uproar. It sounded like the shrieks of hundreds of passing souls mingled with deep roars and screeches.

Even Mr. Billings turned a shade paler under his tan.

"In the name of heaven what was that?" he exclaimed.

As he spoke a huge tawny form was seen to climb upon the rail of the rusty old steamer and then launch itself into the sea with a mighty roar.

"A lion!" exclaimed Jack, "by all that's wonderful, a lion."

"That explains the mystery of those noises and the predicament of those poor fellows crowded on the stern away from the boats," said Mr. Billings, who had quite regained his self-possession.

"But—but I don't understand," said Jack.

"That ship has a cargo of wild animals on board," explained Mr. Billings. "Such shipments are regularly made from Hamburg, her hailing port, to America. Most probably she had lions, tigers, leopards, great serpents and other animals on board. When her bow was

stove in a number of cages were smashed and the wild beasts escaped."

"That accounts for the shooting I saw, then," exclaimed Jack; "they must have been firing from the raised stern at the animals which menaced them on the main deck."

"Unquestionably. I am glad I brought my own shooting iron," said Mr. Billings. "I packed it along in case we had trouble with a mutinous crew."

They were now close to the blazing ship. The heat and odor of the flames were clearly felt.

"We'll have to pull around on the weather side," decided Mr. Brown. "If we come up under the wind, we'd all be scorched before we could effect any rescues.

"Pull round the stern, my lads," he ordered.

"Aye, aye, sir," came in a deep-throated chorus from the crew.

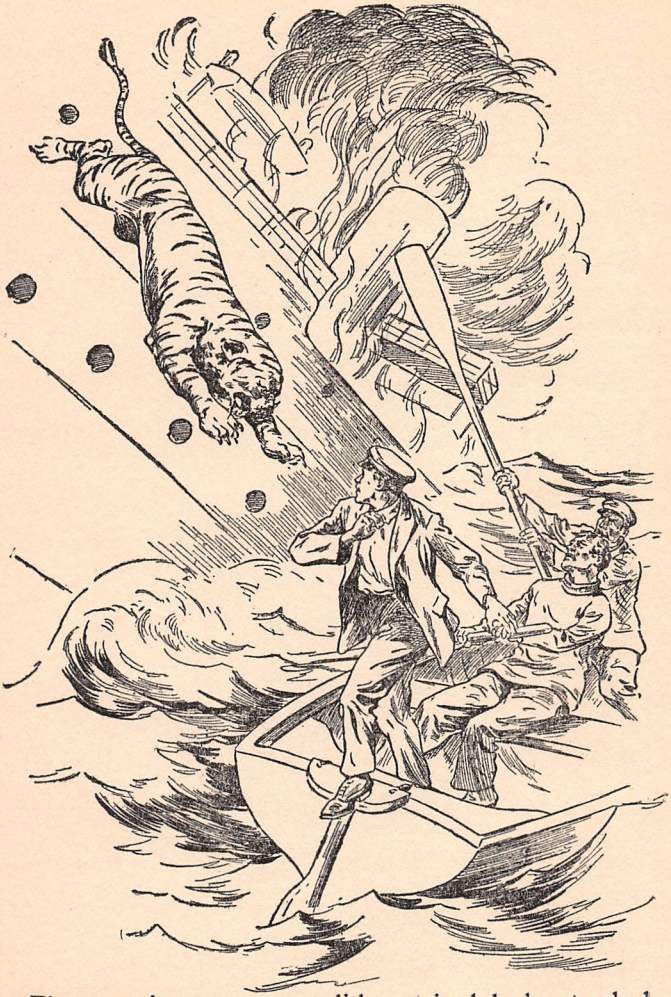
As the four boats made under the stern, white, anxious faces looked down on them.

"Thank heaven you've come!" exclaimed the captain, whose haggard countenance showed all that he had been through. "We're just about at our last ditch. The animals we were taking from Jamrachs, in Hamburg, for an American circus, broke loose after the collision with the derelict. They've killed two of my men and maimed another."

"All right, my hearties, just hold on a minute and we'll have you out of that," exclaimed Mr. Billings cheerfully.

More roars and screeches from the loosened animals checked him. Then came more shots, telling of an attack on the stern, the only cool part of the ship left, which had been repulsed. The flames shot up, seeming to reach to the sky, and the smoke blotted out the sun, enveloping everything in the burning ship's vicinity in a sort of twilight.

"Do you think we'll be able to get all of them off?" asked Jack eagerly.



The next instant a great lithe, striped body streaked through the air.—*Page* 213.

"I'm in hopes that we will," said Mr. Billings, "if nothing untoward happens."

There was, Jack noticed, a shade of anxiety in the young officer's tone. There was, then, some peril, of which he knew nothing as yet, attached to the enterprise, thought Jack. But of the nature of the danger he had no guess till later.

As the first boat, Mr. Billings' craft, drew alongside the blistering side of the burning ship, a Jacob's ladder came snaking down from the stern. At almost the same moment Jack, who had been looking upward, uttered a shout of alarm.

The fierce face of a wild beast had suddenly appeared above the rail of the blazing *Oriana*. The next instant a great lithe, striped body streaked through the air straight for the boat. Instinctively Jack, who saw the huge form of the tiger, for that was the desperate flame-maddened creature that had made the jump, sprang for the side of the boat and dived overboard.

He was not a second too soon. The tiger struck the side of the boat in the stern just where Jack had been sitting a fragment of a minute before. The boat heeled over as the great beast, mad with terror, clawed at its sides with its fore-paws and endeavored to climb in. Mr. Billings, pale but firm, whipped out his revolver with an untrembling hand while the men, utterly unnerved, dropped their oars and shouted with alarm.

Bang! The tiger gave a struggle that almost capsized the boat. Then, suddenly, its claws relaxed their hold and it slid into the water, limp and lifeless, shot between the eyes. But where was Jack? The question just occurred to Mr. Billings when, looking up suddenly, he saw something that made him yell a swift order at the top of his lungs.

"Row for your lives, men, row. She's going to blow up!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAST AWAY WITH A PYTHON.

When Jack dived overboard he was so unnerved by the sudden apparition of the fear-frenzied tiger that he rose some distance back of the boat. He came to the surface just in time to see the slaying of the animal and hear Mr. Billings' sharp cry of warning.

Before he could attract attention the boats were all pulling at top speed from the burning ship.

"She's going to blow up!" the words etched themselves on Jack's brain with the rapidity of a photographic plate.

He saw a convulsive tremor shake the big steel fabric and the despairing shouts of the men in the stern rang in his ears. At the same moment he dived and began swimming with all his

strength away from the doomed ship. Suddenly came a shock that even under water seemed to drive his ear-drums in.

Then he felt himself seized as if in a giant's grip and dragged down, down, down. His vision grew scarlet. His heart beat as if it must burst from his frame and his entire body felt as if it was being cruelly compressed in a monster vise. Jack knew what had occurred: the boilers of the *Oriana* had blown up and he was being carried down by the suction of the hull as it sank.

Just as he felt that he could no longer endure the strain, the dragging sensation ceased. Like a stone from a catapult Jack was projected up again to the surface of the sea. The sky, the ocean, everything burned red as flame as he regained the blessed air and sucked it in in great lungfulls.

For a moment or so he was actually unconscious. Then, as his normal functions returned,

and his sight grew less blurred, he made out a hatch floating not far from him. He struck out for this and clambered upon it. The sea was strewn with the wreckage of the explosion. Beams, skylights, even charred and blistered metal liferafts floated all about him. But these did not engross Jack's attention for long after he had cast his gaze in the direction where the *Oriana* last lay. There he encountered an extraordinary sight.

On the surface of the ocean floated the stern section of the sunken steamer. To it still clung the occupants that he had last seen there. Jack rubbed his eyes and looked and looked again. Yes, there was no doubt about it, the after part of the *Oriana* was still afloat, although how long it would remain so it was impossible to say.

Jack guessed, and as it afterward transpired, guessed correctly, that the watertight bulkhead doors, which had automatically been closed all over the ship when the collision occurred, were

sustaining the stern fragment of the ship on the surface. This part of the *Oriana,* unharmed by the explosion or the collision, was now floating much as a corked bottle might be expected to do, excepting, of course, that there was a marked list to the drifting fragment.*

Jack now saw the scattered boats returning to the scene. The man in command of each was urging the crews on with voice and gesture. Not one had been harmed, but it was a narrow escape. Jack set up a shout, but apparently, in the excitement of racing for the floating stern part of the *Oriana,* he was unnoticed. However, this did not alarm him, for he was sure of being able to attract attention before long.

A sudden lurch of the hatchway on which he was drifting, and the sound of a slithering

* The after part of the ill-fated tank steamer *Oregon,* sunk 100 miles off Sandy Hook, in 1913, when, during a severe storm, she broke in two, floated with the survivors in exactly the manner described in the *Oriana's* case.—Author's Note.

What he saw made him almost lose his grip on the hatchway.—*Page* 219

motion as of some heavy body being dragged along some rough surface, made him turn his head.

What he saw made him almost lose his grip on the hatchway.

The hideous flat head and wicked eyes of a huge python faced him. The great snake, escaping somehow from the catastrophe to the menagerie ship, had swum for the same refuge Jack had chosen. Now it was dragging its brilliantly mottled body, as thick as a man's thigh, up upon the hatchway. The floating "raft" dipped under the great snake's weight, while Jack, literally petrified with horror, watched without motion or outcry.

But apparently the snake was too badly stunned by the explosion to be inclined for mischief. It coiled its great body compactly in gay-colored folds on the hatch and lay still. But Jack noticed that its mottled eyes never left his figure.

"Gracious, I can't stand this much longer," thought Jack.

He looked about him for another bit of wreckage to which he might swim and be free of his unpleasant neighbor. But the débris had all drifted far apart by this time and his limbs felt too stiffened by his involuntary dive to the depths of the ocean for him to attempt a long swim.

Not far off he could see the boats busily transferring the castaways of the *Oriana* on board. Supposing they pulled away from the scene without seeing him? Undoubtedly, they deemed him lost and would not make a search for him. Warmly as the sun beat down, Jack felt a chill that turned his blood to ice-water run over him at the thought. Left to drift on the broad Atlantic with a serpent for a companion and without a weapon with which to defend himself. The thought was maddening and he resolutely put it from him.

So far the great snake had lain somnolently,

but now, as the sun began to warm its body, Jack saw the brilliantly colored folds begin to writhe and move. It suddenly appeared to become aware of him and raised its flat, spade-shaped head above its coils.

Its tongue darted in and out of its red mouth viciously. Jack became conscious of a strong smell of musk, the characteristic odor of serpents.

His mouth went dry with fear, although he was naturally a brave lad, as we know. A dreadful fascination seemed to hold him in thrall. He could not have moved a muscle if his life, as he believed it did, depended on his escape. The hideous head began to sway rhythmically in a sort of dance. Still Jack could not take his eyes from that swaying head and darting red tongue. A species of hypnotic spell fell over him. He heard nothing and saw nothing but the swaying snake.

All at once the head shot forward. With a wild yell Jack, out of his trance at last, fell back-

ward off the hatch into the water. At the same instant Mr. Billings' pistol spoke. Again and again he fired it till the great snake's threshing form lay still in death. Unwilling to give Jack up for lost, although he feared in his heart that this was the case, the third officer would not leave the scene till all hope was exhausted. Sweeping the vicinity with his glasses, he had spied the impending tragedy on the hatch.

Full speed had been made to the rescue at once and, as we know, aid arrived in the nick of time. As Jack rose sputtering to the surface strong hands pulled him into the boat. He was told what had happened.

"A narrow escape," said Mr. Billings, beside whom sat Captain Sanders of the lost steamer. He looked the picture of woe.

"I owe my life to you, Mr. Billings," burst out Jack, holding out his hand.

The seaman took it in his rough brown palm.

"That's all right, my lad," he said. "Maybe you'll do as much for me some day."

And then, as if ashamed even of this display of emotion, he bawled out in his roughest voice:

"Give way there, bullies! Don't sit dreaming! Bend your backs!"

As the boats flew back toward where the great bulk of the *Columbia,* her rails lined with eager passengers, rested immobile on the surface of the ocean, the castaway captain turned a glance backward to the stern of his ship, which was still floating but settling and sinking fast. It was easy to guess what his thoughts were.

"That's one of the tragedies of the sea," thought Jack.

CHAPTER XXIX.

CAPTURED BY RADIO.

It was two days later and they were nearing Southampton, but the stop they had made to aid the *Oriana's* crew had given the Britisher a big lead on them. The passengers eagerly clustered to read Jack's wireless bulletin from the other ship which was posted every day. Excitement ran high.

Jack had seen no more of Professor Dusenberry, but he had spent a good deal of leisure time pondering over the code message the queer little dried up man had sent. Raynor, who had quite a genius for such things, and spent much time solving the puzzles in magazines and periodicals, helped him. But they did not make much progress.

Suddenly, however, the night before they were

due to reach Southampton, Jack was sitting staring at the message when, without warning, as such things sometimes will, the real sense of the message leaped at him from the page.

"Meet me at *three* on the paving *stones,* the weather is *fine* but got no *specimens,* there is no *suspicion* as you have *directed* but I'm afraid *wrong.*"

Taking every fourth word from the dispatch then, it read as follows:

"Three stones. Fine specimens. Suspicion directed wrong."

Jack sat staring like one bewitched as the amazingly simple cipher revealed itself in a flash after his hours of study. Granted he had struck the right solution, the message was illuminating enough. Professor Dusenberry was a dangerous crook, instead of the harmless old "crank" the passengers had taken him for, and his cipher message was to a confederate.

But on second thought Jack was inclined to believe that it was merely a coincidence that placing together every fourth word of the jumbled message made a dispatch having a perfectly understandable bearing on the jewel theft. It was impossible to believe that Professor Dusenberry, mild and self-effacing, could have had a hand in the attack on the diamond merchant. Jack was sorely perplexed.

He was still puzzling over the matter when the object of his thoughts appeared in his usual timid manner. He wished to send another dispatch, he said. While he wrote it out Jack studied the mild, almost benevolent features of the man known as Prof. Dusenberry.

"But there's one test," he thought to himself. "If the 'fourth word' test applies to this dispatch also, the Professor is a criminal, of a dangerous type, in disguise. But he contrived to glance carelessly over the dispatch when the professor handed it to him and fumbled in his pocket for

a wallet with which to pay for it. Not till the seemingly mild old man had shuffled out did Jack apply his test to it. The message read as follows:

"*Columbia* fast as motorboat, watch her in Southampton. Am well and will no more time throw away on fake life-preserver."

F.

With fingers that actually trembled, Jack wrote down every fourth word. Here is the result he obtained:

"Motorboat Southampton. Will throw life-preserver."

"By the great horn-spoon," exclaimed Jack to himself, "it worked out like a charm. But still, what am I going to do? I can't go to the captain with no more evidence than this. He would not order the man detained. I have it!" he cried,

after a moment of deep reflection. "The Southampton detectives have been already wirelessed about the crime and are going to board the ship. I'll flash them another message, telling them of the plan to drop the jewels overboard in a life-preserver so that they will float till the motorboat picks them up."

Jack first, however, sent the supposed Prof. Dusenberry's message through to London, with which he was now in touch. He noted it was to the same address as before, that of a Mr. Jeremy Pottler, 38 South Totting Road, W. Then he summoned the Southampton station, and, before long, a messenger brought to the police authorities there a dispatch that caused a great deal of excitement. He had just finished doing this when Jack's attention was attracted by the re-entrance of the professor.

He wanted to look over the dispatch he had sent again, he said, but Jack noticed that his

eyes, singularly keen behind his spectacles, swept the table swiftly as if in search of something. The abstract that Jack had made of the cipher dispatch lay in plain view. Jack hastily swept it out of sight by an apparently careless movement. But he felt the professor's eyes fixed on him keenly.

But if Prof. Dusenberry had observed anything he said nothing. He merely remarked that the dispatch appeared to be all right and walked out again in his peculiar shambling way.

"The old fox suspects something," thought Jack. "I wonder if he saw that little translation I took the liberty of making of his dispatch. If he did, he must have known that I smelled a rat."

Just then Raynor dropped in on his way on watch.

"Well, we're in to-morrow, Jack," he said, "but I'm afraid the Britisher will beat us out."

"I'm afraid so, too," responded Jack. "Their

operator has been crowing over me all day. But at any rate it was in a good cause."

"Yes, and they're taking up a subscription for the shipwrecked men at the concert to-night, I hear, so that they won't land destitute."

"That's good; but say, Bill, you're off watch to-morrow and I want you to do something for me."

"Anything you say."

"This may involve danger."

"Great Scott, you talk like Sherlock Holmes or a dime novel. What's up?"

"I've got the man who stole those diamonds."

"What!"

"Don't talk so loud. I mean what I say. Listen."

And Jack related everything that had occurred.

"Now, what I want you to do is to watch Prof. Dusenberry, as he calls himself, to-morrow when we get into the harbor. His is an inside stateroom so that he can't throw it out of a porthole

from there. He'll most likely go to one at the end of a passage."

"Yes, and then what?"

"I'd do it myself but the old fox suspects me, I half fancy, and if he saw me in the vicinity he'd change his plans. You'd better take two of your huskiest firemen with you, Billy. He's an ugly customer, I fancy, and might put up a bad fight."

"U-m-m-m, some job," mused Billy. "Why don't you put the whole thing up to the captain?"

"It would do no good the way things are now, and he might get wind of it and hide the jewels so that they couldn't be found. Anyhow, we've no proof against him till he is actually caught throwing the jewels out in that life-preserver to his confederates in the motorboat."

"I see, you want to catch him red-handed, but what about those cipher radios?"

"There's no way of proving that I read the

cipher right," said Jack. "Our only way is to do as I suggested."

"I hear that Rosenstein has offered a big reward for the recovery of the diamonds," said Billy. "He's up and about again, you know."

"Well, Billy, I think he'll have his diamonds back by to-morrow noon if we follow out my plan.

And so it was arranged. The next morning Jack received a message from Southampton:

"All ready. Does our man suspect anything?"

This was Jack's answer:

"Not so far as I know. Have a plan to catch him red-handed. You watch the motorboat."

Saluted by the whistles of a hundred water craft, the *Columbia* made stately progress into Southampton harbor. As her leviathan bulk moved majestically along under reduced speed, her whistles blowing and her flag dipping in acknowledgment of the greeting, Jack, with a beat-

ing heart, stood on the upper deck watching earnestly for developments.

He knew that Billy and the two firemen he had selected to help him, on what might prove a dangerous job, were below watching Prof. Dusenberry. They all wore stewards' uniforms so that the man who Jack believed struck down the diamond merchant and stole the stones might not get suspicious at seeing them about in the corridors.

"I believe they must have changed their plans, after all," Jack was thinking when, from the shore, there shot out, at tremendous speed, a sharp-bowed, swift motorboat. It headed straight for the *Columbia.* As it drew closer, Jack saw it held two men. Both were blowing a whistle, waving flags and pointing at the big ship as if they, like many other small water craft, were just out to get a glimpse of the triumph of American shipbuilders.

They maneuvered close alongside, while Jack's

fingers grasped the rail till the paint flaked off under the pressure he exerted in his excitement. What was happening below? he wondered. Could Billy and his companions carry out their part of the program? Not far from the boy the diamond merchant, unconscious of the drama being enacted on his account, stood, with bandaged head, explaining for the hundredth time the beauty and the value of the gems he had lost.

"Five thousand thalers I give if I get them back," he declared.

Suddenly Jack's heart gave a bound. From a port far down on the side of the ship, and almost directly under him, a white object was hurled. It struck the water with a splash and spread out, floating buoyantly.

Instantly the black motorboat darted forward, one of the men on board holding a boat hook extended to grasp the floating life-preserver, hidden in which was a king's fortune in gems.

Jack stood still just one instant. Then, driven

by an impulse he could not explain, he threw off his coat, kicked off the loose slippers he wore when at work, and the next moment he had mounted the rail and made a clean, swift dive for the life-preserver.

Billy rushed on deck, excitement written on his face, just as Jack dived overboard.

"Jack! Jack!" he shouted.

But he was too late.

"Great Neptune, has the boy gone mad?" exclaimed Captain Turner, who had passed along the deck just in time to see Jack's dive. Regardless of sea etiquette, Billy grasped the skipper's arm and rushed into a narrative of the plan he and Jack had hoped to carry out.

"But Dusenberry was too quick for us, sir," he concluded.

"Never mind that, now," cried the captain, "that boy may be in danger."

He looked over the rail, which, owing to most of the passengers being busy below with their

preparations for landing, was almost deserted. Billy was at his side. In the black motorboat two men stood with their hands up. Alongside was a speedy-looking launch full of strapping big men with firm jaws and the unmistakable stamp of detectives the world over. Some of them were hauling on board the police launch Jack's dripping figure, which clung fast to the life-preserver. Others kept the men in the black launch covered with their pistols.

Half an hour later, when the passengers—all that is but Mr. Rosenstein—had gone ashore (the diamond merchant had been asked by the captain to remain), a little group was assembled in Captain Turner's cabin. In the center of it stood Professor Dusenberry, alias Foxy Fred, looking ever more meek and mild than usual. He had been seized and bound by the two disguised firemen as he threw the life-preserver, but not in time to prevent his getting it out of the port. Beside him, also manacled, were the two men

who had been in the motorboat and who, according to the Southampton police, formed a trio of the most daring diamond theives who ever operated.

"I think we may send for Mr. Rosenstein now," said Captain Turner with a smile. "Only I hope that he is not subject to attacks of heart failure. Ready," he said, turning to Jack, who stood side by side with Billy, "take these and give them to Mr. Rosenstein with your compliments."

Jack blushed and hesitated.

"I'd,—I'd rather—sir—if you—don't mind ——" he stammered.

"You may regard what I just said as an order if you like," said Captain Turner, trying to look grim, while everybody else, but Jack and the prisoners, smiled.

"You wanted to see me on important business, captain?" asked Mr. Rosenstein, as he entered. "You will keep me as short a time as possible,

please. I must get to Scotland Yard, my diamonds——"

"Are right here in this boy's hand," said the captain, pushing Jack forward.

"What! This is the fellow who took them?" thundered the diamond merchant.

"No; this is the lad you have to thank for recovering them for you from those three men yonder," said the captain.

"Professor Dusenberry!" exclaimed the diamond expert, throwing up his hand.

"Or Foxy Fred," grinned one of the English detectives.

"Oh, my head, it goes round," exclaimed Mr. Rosenstein.

"This lad, with wonderful ingenuity, and finally courage, when he leaped overboard to save your property, traced the guilty parties," went on the captain, "and by wireless arranged for their capture."

"It's a bit of work to be proud of," said the head of the English contingent.

"It is that," said the captain. "It has cleared away a cloud that might have hung over this ship till the mystery was dispelled, which probably would have been never."

Mr. Rosenstein, who had taken the diamonds from Jack, stood apparently stupefied, holding them on his palm. Suddenly, however, to Jack's great embarrassment, he threw both arms round the boy's neck and saluted him on both cheeks. Then he rushed at Billy and finally the two firemen, who dodged out of the way. Then he drew out a check book and began writing rapidly. He handed a pink slip of paper to Jack. It was a check for $5,000.

"A souvenir," he said.

"But—but——" began Jack, "we didn't do it for money. It was our duty to the company and——"

"It's your duty to the company to take that

check, then," laughed Captain Turner, and in the end Jack did. The two firemen, who had helped the boys, received a good share of it and later were promoted by the company for their good work. As for Prof. Dusenberry and his companions, they vanish from our story when, in custody of the detectives, they went over the side a few minutes later. But Jack and Billy today have two very handsome diamond and emerald scarf-pins, the gifts of the grateful Mr. Rosenstein.

"Looks as if we are always having adventures of some kind or another," said Billy to Jack that evening as they strolled about the town, for the ship would not sail for Cherbourg, her last port before the homeward voyage, till the next day.

"It certainly does look that way," agreed Jack and then, with a laugh, he added:

"But they don't all turn out so profitably as this one."

With which Billy agreed.

CHAPTER XXX.

THURMAN PLOTS.

It was two nights before the *Columbia,* on her homeward voyage, entered New York harbor. On the trip across she had once more had the big British greyhound of the seas for a rival. But this time there was a different tale to tell. The *Columbia* was coming home, as Billy Raynor put it, "with a broom at the main-mast head."

All day the wireless snapped out congratulations from the shore. Jack was kept busy transmitting shore greetings and messages from returning voyagers who had chosen the finest ship under the stars and stripes on which to return to the United States. Patriotism ran riot as every bulletin showed the *Columbia* reeling over two or three knots more an hour than her rival. One enthusiastic millionaire offered a twenty-

dollar gold piece to every fireman, and five dollars each to all the other members of the crew, if the *Columbia* beat her fleet rival by a five-hour margin. The money was as good as won.

Thurman sat in the wireless room. His head was in his hands and he was thinking deeply. Should he or should he not send that message to Washington which, he was sure, would cause Jack's arrest the instant the ship docked. He had struggled with his conscience for some time. But then the thought of the reward and the fancied grudge he owed Jack overtopped every other consideration. He seized the key and began calling the big naval station.

It was not long before he got a reply, for when not talking to warships the land stations of the department use normal wave-lengths.

"Who is this?" came the question from the government man.

"It's X. Y. Z," rapped out Thurman.

This was the signature he had appended to his other messages.

"The thunder you say," spelled out the other; "we thought we'd never hear from you again."

"Well, here I am."

"So it appears. Well, are you ready to tell us who this chap is who's been mystifying us so?"

"I am."

"Great ginger, wait till I get Rear-admiral ——— and Secretary ——— on the 'phone. It's late but they'll get out of bed to hear this news."

But it transpired that both the officials were at a reception and Thurman was asked to wait till they could be rushed at top speed to the wireless station in automobiles. At last everything was ready and Thurman, while drops of sweat rolled down his face, rapped out his treachery and sent it flashing from the antennæ across the sea.

"Thank you," came the reply when he had finished, "the secretary also wishes me to thank

you and assure you of your reward. Secret Service men will meet the ship at the pier."

"And Jack Ready, what about him?"

"He will be taken care of. You had better proceed to Washington as soon as possible after you land."

"How much will the reward be?" greedily demanded Thurman.

"The secretary directs me to say that it will be suitable," was the rejoinder.

The next morning, when Jack came on duty, he sent a personal message to Uncle Toby via Siasconset. This was it:

"Universal detector a success. Will you wire Washington of my intention to proceed there with all speed when I arrive?

"JACK."

Late that day he got back an answer that

appeared to astonish him a good deal, for he sat knitting his brows over it for some moments.

"Washington says some ding-gasted sneak has been cutting up funny tricks. Looks like you have been talking.

"TOBY READY."

This characteristic message occupied Jack for some moments till he thought of a reply to its rather vaguely worded contents. Then he got Siasconset and shot this through the air:

"Have talked to no one who could have seen Washington. My last letter to the Secretary of the Navy was that I thought I was on the road to success.

"JACK."

No reply came to this and Jack went off watch with the matter as much of a mystery as ever. But as Thurman came in to relieve him a sudden

suspicion shot across Jack's mind. Could Thurman have——?

He recalled the night he had caught him examining the device with such care! Jack had since removed it, but in searching in the waste basket for a message discarded by mistake he had since come across what appeared to be crude sketches of the Universal Detector. If Thurman had not drawn them, Jack was at a loss to know who had. But for some mysterious reason he only smiled as he left the wireless room.

"If you've been up to any hocus-pocus business, Mr. Thurman," he said to himself, as he descended to dinner, "you are going to get the surprise of your life within a very short time."

After dinner he came back to the upper deck again, but as he gained it his attention was arrested by the scream of the wireless spark. It was a warm night and the door of the cabin was open. Jack stopped instinctively to listen to the roaring succession of dots and dashes.

"He's calling Washington," said Jack to himself as he listened.

"He's got them," he exclaimed a minute later.

"Hullo! Hullo! I guess I was right in my guess, then, after all. Oh, Thurman, what a young rascal you are."

He listened attentively as Thurman shot out his message to the National Capital. Jack repeated it in an undertone as the spark crackled and squealed.

"Do—I—get—my—reward—right—away?"

Jack actually burst, for some inexplicable reason, into a hearty laugh.

"Oh, Thurman! Thurman!" he exploded to himself. "What a badly fooled young man you are going to be."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE "SUITABLE REWARD."

The arrival of the *Columbia* at her dock the next day was in the nature of an ovation. A band played "Hail Columbia," and a dense crowd blocked the docks and adjacent points of vantage to view the great liner which had taken the blue ribbon of the seas from England's crack ship. News of the dramatic rescue of the crew of the *Oriana,* wirelessed at the time of the occurrence to the newspapers, had inflamed public interest in the big ship too, and her subsequent doings had been eagerly followed in the dailies.

"Great to be home again, isn't it, old fellow?" asked Raynor, coming up to Jack as a dozen puffing tugs nosed the towering *Columbia* into her dock.

"It is, indeed," said Jack, looking over the rail. "I'm going to——"

He broke off suddenly and began waving frantically to two persons in the crowd. One was an old man, rather bent, but hale and hearty and sunburned. Beside him was a pretty girl. It was Helen Dennis and her father, Captain Dennis, who had been rescued from a sinking sailing ship during Jack's first voyage, as told in the "Ocean Wireless Boys on the Atlantic." Captain Dennis, since the disaster, had been unable to get another ship to command and had been forced to accept a position as watchman on one of the docks, but Jack had been working all he knew how to get the captain another craft, so far, however, without success.

"There's one reason why you're glad to be home," said Raynor slyly, waving to Helen. "You're a lucky fellow."

The gang-plank was down, but before any passengers were allowed ashore, way was made

for four stalwart, clean-shaven men who hurried on board.

"Wonder who those fellows are?" said Raynor; "must be some sort of big-wigs."

"Yes, they certainly got the right of way," responded Jack without much interest.

Thurman joined them.

"I hear that the Secret Service men are on board," he said. "Must be looking for someone."

"I suppose so," said Jack. "They usually are."

Somebody tapped Jack on the shoulder. It was one of the men who had boarded the ship. An evil leer passed over Thurman's face as he saw this.

"Are you Jack Ready?" asked the man.

"That's my name," replied Jack.

The man threw back his coat, displaying a gold badge. His three companions stood beside him.

"I want you to come to Washington with us at once," said the man. "I am operative Thomas of the United States Secret Service."

"Why what's the matter? What's he done?" demanded Raynor.

"That's for the Navy Department to decide," said the man sternly. Thurman had slipped away after the man had displayed his badge. His envious mind was now sure of its revenge. He, too, meant to get the first train to Washington.

"Don't worry, old fellow," said Jack. "Just slip ashore and make my excuses to Helen and her father, will you, and then meet me in Washington at the Willard. I think I shall have some news that will surprise you."

Greatly mystified, Raynor obeyed, while Jack and the four men, two on each side of him, left the ship. Thurman followed them closely. His flabby face wore a look of satisfaction.

"Two birds with one stone," he muttered to himself. "I've got even with Jack Ready and I get a reward for doing it. Slick work."

The trip to Washington was uneventful. On their arrival there Jack and the Secret Service

men went straight to the Navy Department. They passed through a room filled with waiting persons having business there, and were at once admitted to the office of the Secretary of the Navy, a dignified looking man with gray hair and mustache, who sat ensconced behind a large desk littered with papers and documents.

There were several other gentlemen in the room. Some of them were in naval uniforms and all had an official appearance that was rather overawing.

"So, this is our young man," said the Secretary, as Jack removed his hat. "Sit down, Mr. Ready, these gentlemen and myself wish to talk to you."

Then, for an hour or more, Jack described the Universal Detector and answered scores of questions. After the first few minutes his sense of embarrassment wore off and he talked easily and naturally. When he had finished, and every-

body's curiosity was satisfied, the Secretary turned to him.

"And you are prepared to turn this instrument over to the United States navy?"

"That was the main object I had in designing it," said Jack, "but I am at a loss to know how you discovered that I was on board the *Columbia.*"

"That will soon be explained," said the Secretary, with a smile that was rather enigmatic. "You recollect having a little fun with our navy operators?"

Jack colored and stammered something while everybody in the room smiled.

"Don't worry about that," laughed the Secretary. "It just upset the dignity of some of our navy operators. Well, following that somebody offered, for a consideration, to tell us who it was that had discovered the secret of a Universal Detector. It turned out, as I had expected from our previous correspondence, that it was

you. But not till two nights ago, when our informant again wirelessed, did we know that you were at sea."

"But—but, sir," stuttered Jack, greatly mystified, "who did this?"

The Secretary pressed a button on his desk. A uniformed orderly instantly answered.

"Tell Mr. Thurman to come in," said the Secretary.

There was a brief silence, then the door opened and Thurman, with an expectant look and an assured manner, stepped into the room.

"Mr. Thurman?" asked the Secretary.

"Yes, sir," said Thurman in a loud, confident voice, "I thought I'd hurry over here as soon as the ship docked and talk to you about my work in discovering for you the fellow who invented the Universal Detector. I——"

He suddenly caught sight of Jack and turned a sickly yellow. Jack looked steadily at the fel-

low who, he had guessed for some time, had been evilly interested in the detector.

"Well, go on, Mr. Thurman," said the Secretary, encouragingly, but with a peculiar look at the corners of his mouth.

Thurman shuffled miserably.

"I'd prefer not to talk with—with him in the room," he said, nodding his head sideways at Jack.

"Why not? Mr. Ready has just sold his invention to the United States government."

"Sold it, sir——" began Jack, flushing, "why I——"

The Secretary held up a hand to enjoin silence. Then he turned to the thoroughly uncomfortable Thurman.

"We feel, Mr. Thurman," he said, "that you really tried to do us a great service."

Thurman recovered some of his self-assurance. Could he have had the skill to read the faces

about him, though, he must have known that a bomb was about to burst.

"Thank you, sir," he said, "I did what I could, what I thought was my duty. And now, sir, about that reward."

" 'Suitable reward,' was what was said, I think, Mr. Thurman," said the Secretary.

"Well, yes, sir, 'suitable reward,' " responded Thurman, his eyes glistening with cupidity.

"Mr. Thurman," and the Secretary's voice was serious and impressive, "these gentlemen and I have decided that the most suitable reward for a young man as treacherous and mean as you have shown yourself to be, would be to be kicked downstairs. Instead I shall indicate to you the door and ask you to take your leave."

"But—but—I told you who the fellow was that had discovered the detector. Why, I even made drawings of it for you."

"I don't doubt that," said the Secretary dryly.

"There was only one weak point in your whole scheme, Mr. Thurman, and that was that Mr. Ready wrote us some time ago when he first began his experiments about his work and asked some advice. At that time he informed us that if he succeeded in producing a Universal Detector that it would be at the service of this government. So you see that you were kind enough to inform us of something we knew already. But for a time we were at a loss to know whether it was not some other inventor working on similar lines who had discovered such a detector. To find out definitely we fine-combed the country."

"And—and I get no reward?" stuttered Thurman.

"Except the one I mentioned and the possible lesson you may have learned from your experience. Good-afternoon, Mr. Thurman."

Thurman was so thunderstruck by the collapse of his hopes of reaping a fortune by his treach-

ery that he appeared for a moment to be deprived of the power of locomotion. The Secretary nodded to the orderly, who came forward and took the wretched youth, for whom Jack could not help feeling sorry, by the arm and led him to the door. This was the last that was seen of Thurman for a long time, but Jack was destined to meet him again, thousands of miles away and under strange circumstances.

When Jack left the Navy Department he felt as if he was walking on air. In his pocket was a check, intended as a sort of retaining fee by the government, till tests should have established beyond a doubt the value of his invention. His eyes were dancing and all he felt that he needed was a friend to share his pleasure with. This need was supplied on his return to the hotel, for there was a telegram from Billy Raynor, telling Jack to meet him on an evening train. It wound up with these words:

"Helen Dennis and myself badly worried. Hope everything is all right."

"All right," smiled Jack, "yes, all right, and then some."

CHAPTER XXXII.

THE PLOTTER'S TRIUMPH.

The face of one of the first of the passengers to disembark from the train as it rolled into the depot was a familiar one to Jack. With a thrill of pleasure he darted through the crowd to clasp the hand of his old friend, Captain Simms.

"Here's a coincidence," he exclaimed. "I'm here to meet Billy Raynor. He must have come on the same train. But are you ill, sir? Is anything the matter?"

"Jack, my boy," said the captain, who was pale and drawn, "a terrible thing has happened. The code has been stolen."

"Stolen! By whom?"

"Undoubtedly by Judson and his gang. I thought I saw them on the train between Clayton and New York. I was on my way here with

the completed code. I had it under my pillow in my berth on the sleeper. When I awakened it had gone."

"Didn't you have a hunt made for Judson when you reached New York?"

"Yes, but we had made two stops in the night. Undoubtedly, they got off at one of them. Unless that code is found I'm a ruined and a disgraced man."

At that moment Billy Raynor came hurrying up. But there was not much warmth in Jack's welcome to him. His mind was busy with other things.

"What's the matter?" said Billy in a low voice, for he too had noticed Captain Simms' dejection.

"Never mind now," whispered Jack, "I'll tell you later. If I may suggest it, sir," he said, addressing the captain, who appeared completely broken by the loss of the code, "hadn't we better get into a cab and drive to the Willard? You are not going to the department to-night?"

"No, I couldn't face them to-night," said the captain. "We'll do as you say."

"There may be a way of catching the rascals," said Jack as the taxicab bumped off.

The captain shook his head.

"The code is in the hands of the ambassador of the foreign power that wanted it as the price of a contract by this time," he said. "It is gone beyond recovery. I am disgraced."

On their arrival at the hotel, the captain retired at once to his room. The boys had dinner without much appetite for the meal and then set out for a stroll to talk things over.

"This is a terrible off-set to my good news," said Jack.

"Don't you think there's a chance of getting the code back?" asked Billy.

Jack shook his head.

"I think it is as Captain Simms said, the code is in the hands of that ambassador by this time."

"Jack Ready, by all that's good, and Billy too, shake!"

The cry came from up the street and a tall, good-looking lad of their own age came hurrying toward them. It was Ned Rivers, a youth who was interested in wireless and in that way had become acquainted with Jack and Billy on board the *Tropic Queen* while he was accompanying his father on a cruise on that ill-fated ship.

"Ned!" cried Jack.

"You're a sight for sore eyes," exclaimed Billy, and a general handshaking followed.

"What are you doing here, Ned?" asked Jack, after a few more words had been exchanged.

"Yes, I thought you lived in Nebraska," said Billy.

"So we did, but we've moved here. Father's in the Senate now. I thought you knew."

"Congratulations," said Jack. "I guess we'll

have to call you Mr. Senator, Jr., now and tip our hats to you."

"Avast with that nonsense, as they don't say at sea," laughed Ned. "There's our house yonder," and he pointed to a handsome stone residence.

"Hullo, what's that I see on the roof?" asked Jack.

"That's my wireless outfit. Mother made an awful kick about having it there, but at last she gave in."

"So you're still a wireless boy?" said Billy.

"Yes, and I've got a dandy outfit too. Come on over. I want to introduce you to the folks."

"Thanks, we will some other time, but not tonight. We don't feel fit for company. You see quite a disaster has happened to a friend of ours," and under a pledge of secrecy from Ned, who he knew he could rely on, Jack told the lad part of the story of the theft of the code.

"By jove, that is a loss," said Ned sympatheti-

cally. "I've heard dad talking about the new code. It was a very important matter."

"We were going for a walk to discuss the whole question," said Billy.

"Can I join you?" asked Ned.

"Glad to have you," was the rejoinder. Talking and laughing merrily over old times on the *Tropic Queen,* the boys walked on, not noticing much where they were going till they found themselves on an ill-lighted street of rather shabby-looking dwellings.

"Hullo," said Ned, "I don't think much of this part of town. Let's get back to a main street."

"It's a regular slum," said Billy, and the three boys started to retrace their steps. But suddenly Jack stopped and jerked his companions into a doorway. Two figures had just come in sight round the corner. They were headed down the street on the opposite sidewalk.

"It's Judson and his son," whispered Jack. "What can they be doing here?"

"Hiding, most probably," returned Billy.

"Yes, they—hullo! Look, they're going into that alley-way."

The boys darted across the street. Looking down the alley-way, they saw the figures of Judson and his son, by the light of a sickly gas lamp, ascending the steps of a rickety-looking tenement house.

"Jove, this is worth knowing," exclaimed Jack. "If they are really hiding here we can get the police on their track. How lucky that we just let ourselves roam into this part of town."

"We ought to have them arrested at once," said Billy.

"Yes, that's a good idea. But they may have just sneaked through the hallway and out by a rear way. You fellows wait here till I go and see."

"Oh, Jack, you may get in trouble."

"Yes, we'll go with you," said Ned.

"No, you stay here," Jack insisted. "One of us

won't be noticed. Three would. Besides, that house is full of other tenants. Nothing much could happen to me."

In spite of their further protests he walked rapidly, but cautiously, down the alley-way. Noiselessly he entered the hallway and walked to the door of a rear room, where he heard voices. But it was a laboring man and his wife quarreling over something. Jack heard a door open on an upper floor. Then came a voice that thrilled him. It was Jarrow's.

"Hullo, Judson, back again? Well, how did things go?"

Then Jack heard the door closed and locked.

"So, they are really here," he muttered. "What a piece of luck. But the question is, have they got the code? If it is out of their hands it will be well nigh impossible to recover it, for it is a serious matter to charge an ambassador with wrong-doing."

Jack began to ascend the rickety stairs with

great caution. They creaked dismally under his tread. At a door on the second floor he caught the sound of Judson's voice. With a beating heart he crept as close as he dared and listened.

"The plans have all been changed," he heard Judson saying. "We are to take the code to Crotona (the capital of the power represented by the ambassador) ourselves. There's a steamer that leaves Baltimore for Naples to-morrow. We are to take that and proceed from Naples to our destination."

"What a bother," came in Donald's voice. "I don't see why the ambassador didn't take them."

"He said it was too dangerous. He was being watched by the Secret Service men."

"Well, it's just as dangerous for us, if it comes to that," grumbled Jarrow.

"I've got another piece of news for you," said Judson. "As I was passing the Willard to-night I saw Simms, and who do you think was with him?"

"I don't know, I'm sure."

"Those two brats who made trouble for us at Alexandria Bay. It was a good thing I was disguised, for I passed close to them before I recognized them."

"Confound it all," burst out Jarrow, "do you think they know we are here?"

"Not a ghost of a chance of it," said Judson confidently; "anyhow, we've picked a hiding place where no one would ever dream of looking for us."

"That's so. I'll be glad when we get out of the horrid hole," grumbled Donald.

A footstep sounded behind Jack on the creaking boards. It startled him. He had not heard a door open. But now he was confronted by a portly Italian. The man grabbed him by the shoulder.

"Whadda you do-a here?" demanded the man, "me thinka you one-a da sneak-a da tief."

"Let me go," demanded Jack, striving to wrench himself free.

"I no leta you go justa yet. I tinka you here steala da tings," cried the man in a loud voice.

The talk inside Judson's room broke off suddenly.

"Hullo, what's up outside?" exclaimed Donald. "Somebody's collared a thief. Let's see what it's all about."

He flung the door open and the lamplight streamed out full on Jack's face.

Donald fell back a pace with astonishment.

"Great Scott! It's Jack Ready," he exclaimed. "What in the world are you doing here?"

"You knowa desa boy?" asked the Italian, still holding Jack fast.

"Yes, I do. He's no good," replied Donald.

"Dena I throwa him out or calla da police."

"Yes—no, for goodness' sake, not the police," exclaimed Donald. "Dad, Jarrow, here's that Ready kid spying on us. He was caught in the

hall by that Italian next door, who thought he was a sneak thief."

"Ha! Ready, you are the most unlucky lad I know," cried Judson, coming to the door, "we've got you just where we want you this time. There are no chimneys here. Bring him inside."

"Not much! Help!" Jack began to shout, but Jarrow clapped a hand over his mouth.

"Help us run him in here," he ordered the Italian, "I'll pay you for it."

"Whatsa da mat'?" asked the Italian suspiciously. "He no lika you."

"No wonder. He robbed us once. I guess he was here to do it again. We want to settle accounts with him."

"Oh-ho, datsa eet ees it?" said the Italian. "All righta, I no make da troub'."

He gave Jack a forward shove into the room of the wireless boy's enemies.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

IN THE POWER OF THE ENEMY.

As soon as the door was shut and locked, Judson faced Jack.

"Now you keep quiet if you don't want a rap over the head with this," he said, exhibiting a heavy bludgeon.

"Don't dare touch me," spoke Jack boldly.

"That will depend. I want to ask you some questions. Will you answer them?"

"I shall see."

"You followed Donald and me here and were spying on us when that Italian caught you."

"A good thing he did," interjected Donald.

"You heard us planning—er—er something?"

"Possibly I did."

"Boy, I know you did."

"Then what's the sense of asking me?"

"None of your impudence, young man! You've always been too much of a busy-body for your own good," snarled Jarrow.

"What's the use of questioning him, dad?" said Donald. "He'll only lie."

"That's probably correct. I guess he heard everything. What shall we do with him?"

"Make him a prisoner," said Jarrow.

"But we can't stay here to guard him and he'd be out of this room in a jiffy."

"I'll tell you where we'll take him," said Donald. He whispered in his father's ear. Judson's face brightened and he nodded approvingly.

"Just the place. It will serve him right. He got himself into this mess."

"Are you going to let me go?" demanded Jack.

"Certainly not. You've made your bed—you can lie on it."

Jack made a leap for the door. The key was in the lock, but he didn't have a chance to turn it before all three threw themselves on him. A scuf-

fle followed which Judson brought to a quick stop by striking Jack a stunning blow on the head with his bludgeon. With a million stars dancing before him in a void of blackness, Jack went down.

"Now come on quick before anyone spots us," said Jarrow.

Jack's limp form was rolled up in a dirty old blanket so as to look like some kind of a bundle. Then Jarrow and Judson lifted him by the head and feet, while Donald preceded them with the lamp.

The younger Judson led the way out of a rear door to a side hallway. From here two flights of stairs led down to an ill-ventilated, low cellar which was seldom visited and was used mostly for old rubbish and rags. Jack was carried to a high-sided wooden coal bin and his form dropped on a pile of dirty old newspapers and decaying straw. There was a heavy door with an iron bolt on the outside leading into the place.

As Judson closed this, leaving Jack to his fate, he muttered:

"This is the time we don't need to bother about his getting out. He'll stay there till to-morrow, anyhow, and by that time we'll be at sea.

"What time will that auto be at the corner?" asked Donald.

"It should be there in a few minutes. We must get ready right away," replied his father. "Come on, we've no time to lose."

In the meantime Billy and Ned waited on the corner. As the minutes flew by they began to get worried.

"Jack is certainly taking his time," said Ned.

"Perhaps he is scouting about," suggested Billy.

"Perhaps he has fallen into a trap," exclaimed Ned. "I've a good mind to go for the police."

"Well, we'll wait a little longer," said Billy.

Almost an hour passed and there was no sign of Jack.

"I won't wait any longer," declared Ned, when suddenly three figures emerged from the house. Their hats were pulled over their eyes and they glanced about suspiciously.

"It's the two Judsons and Jarrow," exclaimed Billy.

As he spoke a big touring car came down the street and stopped at the mouth of the alley-way. The three persons who had just emerged from the tenement house began to hasten to it, but Billy intercepted them.

"What have you done with Jack?" he demanded.

"Yes, where is he?" cried Ned.

"Out of our way," said Jarrow, giving Billy a shove.

"We don't know any Jack," growled Judson.

Before the boys could stop them they had reached the car and sprung in.

"Drive off at full speed," Judson ordered the chauffeur, and, leaving the boys standing rooted

to the spot, the car dashed off with a roar. Borne back to them they could hear the mocking laughter of its occupants.

"Those rascals have played some trick on Jack and they've got away scot-free," groaned Billy.

"We must hunt for him at once," exclaimed Ned.

The two boys set out for the tenement. It was pitch dark in the hallway. Ned struck a match.

"Jack! Jack! where are you?" he called softly.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE SEARCH FOR JACK.

The two boys, with their hearts heavy as lead, ascended the stairs calling for Jack. On the second floor, as they reached it, a door was suddenly flung open.

"Be jabers, stop that racket. Can't yez be lettin' a dacent family slape in pace?"

Another door flew open and a black, woolly head was poked out.

"What fo' you alls come makin' such a cumsturbance at dis yar hour ob de night?"

"We're looking for a boy who we think has been trapped in this building. Have you seen anything of him?" asked Ned.

"Sure and I haven't. This is a dacent house and dacent folks. Go along wid yer now and let us slape."

"By gollys we don't kidsnap no boys," came from the negro.

Another door was opened and the Italian who had caught Jack in the hall came out.

"Whatsa da mat'?" he asked.

"We're looking for a boy, our chum. He came into this house two hours ago. We're afraid he——" burst out Billy desperately.

"I see-a da boy in deesa hall," said the Italian. "I teenka heem sneaka teef. I catcha heem but two men and a boy in data rooma dere dey taka heem. Dey say dat he robba heem and they getta even."

"Did they take him into the room?" burst out Ned.

The Italian nodded.

"Yes, dey takea heem in. I geeva heem to them," said the man indifferently.

"Great heavens, they invented that story about his robbing them," cried Billy. "They've made

him a prisoner. We must get him out. Jack! Jack!"

No answer came and then Billy, regardless of consequences, flung himself against the door of the room the Italian had indicated. By this time quite a crowd of tenement dwellers had assembled, attracted by the loud voices. At first the door stood firm, but when Ned joined Billy it gave way with a bang, precipitating them into the room.

But now a new voice was added to the uproar. Hans Pumpernickel, a sour old German who owned the tenements and lived there to save rent in a better quarter, put in an appearance.

"Vos is los?" he demanded, "ach himmel, de door vos busted py der outside. Who did dis?"

"We did," said Billy boldly. "My chum was decoyed into this house by some bad characters. This was the room they occupied. But he isn't here."

"Ach du liebe! Vos iss idt I care aboupt your droubles? I haf mein own."

"We'll find Jack if we go through this house from cellar to attic," declared Ned.

"I dond pelief dot boy vos harmed by der men dot hadt idt dis room," declared the crabbed old man. "Dey vos very respectable. Now you pay me for dot door undt den go aboudt your pusiness."

"If you interfere with us we'll call in the police," said Billy.

"Yes, if you want to keep out of trouble, you'll help us," said Ned boldly.

"Is dot so? Undt who iss you?"

"I'm the son of Senator Rivers of Nebraska."

The landlord's jaw dropped. He grew more respectful.

"Vell, vot am I to do?" he asked.

"Don't interfere with us. We'll pay for this door. Hullo, what's that on the floor?" exclaimed

Billy. "Why, it's Jack's knife. But where is he?"

"Den dose nice mens, Mr. Jenkins undt Mister Thompson are kidsnabbers," exclaimed the landlord.

"Are those the names they gave?" asked Billy.

"Ches. Dey pay idt me a month in advance. Dey vost nice gentlemen."

"Yes, very nice," exclaimed Billy bitterly. "However, knowing those names may give a clew later on."

They searched for several hours but found no further trace of Jack. At last, tired out and sick at heart, they returned home. Billy accepted Ned's invitation to stay at the latter's house that night and to lay the matter before the Senator in the morning.

* * * * * * *

Half stunned, Jack lay still for some time on the moldy straw and the old newspapers in the coal bin in the cellar. But at length he mustered

his strength and rose, rather giddily, to his feet.

"Well, this is the limit of tough luck," he complained. "If I don't get out of here before tomorrow, when that steamer sails, the code will have gone for good. If only I'd cut away sooner. Confound that Italian. He spoiled it all with his stupidity."

Besides being pitch dark, the place was full of cobwebs. To add to Jack's discomfort, a spider occasionally dropped on him. Suddenly overhead sounded footsteps and voices.

"Somebody lives up there," he thought. "If I could only attract their attention."

He shouted but nobody answered, although he tried it at intervals for some hours. At last he gave up and sat down on the pile of straw to think. He was very thirsty and his mouth and eyes were full of coal dust and dirt. The roof of the cellar was so low, too, that in moving about he bumped his head against the beams.

Suddenly he remembered that he had some

matches. To strike a light was the work of a moment. Then he located the door. But all his efforts failed to make it budge. He struck another light and this time he made a discovery.

"Gee whiz, that looks like a trap-door just above me," he decided.

He raised his hands and the cut-out square in the flooring came up with ease. Jack scrambled up into a kitchen. In one corner was a ladder, no doubt used when the occupants wished to enter the cellar. Through one of the windows daylight was streaming, the gray light of early dawn.

"Great Scott! I've been down there all night," ejaculated the boy.

He was considering his next step when a large woman, with stout red arms, came into the kitchen. Her husband had to be at work early and she was about to prepare his breakfast. She had a florid, disagreeable face.

"What are you after doing here?" she demanded, picking up a heavy rolling pin.

"I'm trying to get out of this house. Will you show me the way?"

"Indade and I will not. I'll hand yez over ter the perlice." She raised her voice.

"Pat! Pat! come here at onct."

"Phwat's the mather?" came from another room.

"Thare's a thafe forninst the kitchen. Get ther perlice. I'll hold him—he's only a gossoon."

"Are you crazy?" demanded Jack. "I was locked in that cellar by some rascals and got out through your trap-door."

"Tell that to the marines," sneered the woman, as she made a grab for him.

Jack wrenched himself away and dodged a blow from the rolling-pin. The window was open and it was a short drop to the yard. He darted for the window and made the jump.

"Pat! Pat!" yelled the woman.

Jack leaped over a fence at the back of the yard and found himself in an alley. He ran for

his life. Behind him came cries of pursuit but they soon died away. He ran for several blocks, however, and then came to a standstill.

"I guess Ned and Billy went home," he mused. "I'd better hunt up Ned. If his father is a Senator he may be able to use some influence to catch these rascals before they get away for good. I wonder what time that ship sails? By the way, I don't know her name."

At the hotel, to which he went first, he slipped up to his room without attracting much attention and washed off the dirt of the cellar. Then he inquired for Billy and learned that Raynor had telephoned the night before that he was going to stop at Senator Rivers' house and for Jack to come straight over there, if he came in. Jack procured a copy of a commercial newspaper which he knew listed sailings of ships from all important ports. He turned to the Baltimore section. Half way down the column he found this entry:

"Italian-American Line. S.S. *Southern Star,* —Balto., for Naples, Italy. Sails — A. M. (hour indefinite). Mixed cargo. Ten passengers."

"Hurrah! That's the ship, all right," thought Jack, "there's a chance yet that we can stop them."

CHAPTER XXXV.

THE WIRELESS MAKES GOOD.

He lost no time in hastening to Senator Rivers' house. Just as he turned into the gate Billy and Ned emerged. They had spent a sleepless night and were on their way to Police Headquarters to report Jack's absence. As they saw their missing comrade, they set up a glad shout.

"Gracious, where have you been?" demanded Billy.

"We were on our way to the police about you," put in Ned.

"Do you know anything about the Judsons and Jarrow?" asked Jack eagerly.

"Why, yes, they came out of the house some time after you went in. We chased them but they jumped into a high-powered car and escaped."

"I know; they've gone to Baltimore."

"How in the world do you know that?" asked Billy wonderingly.

"I'll tell you it all in a few minutes. Ned, is your father up yet?"

"Gracious, no. But if it's important I can tell him to hurry up."

"I wish you would; there's a chance that we can get back the naval code if you do."

"I'll tell him that, and he'll be dressed and down in record time," cried Ned, running off.

Jack waited to tell his adventures till they were all at breakfast. Then Billy and Ned had to tell their stories.

"Well, you boys certainly have your share of adventures," remarked the Senator, "but the most important thing now is to secure the apprehension of those rascals without delay. We had better call up the steamship company at Baltimore and find out if anyone called Jenkins or Thompson, I think those are the aliases they gave

at the tenement house, are among the passengers."

This was done at once, but to the intense chagrin of all concerned, the telephone company had seized that early hour of the day to repair some wires which had been knocked down in a thunderstorm near Baltimore the night before. It was impossible to communicate with that city till some hours later.

"We might telegraph," suggested Jack.

"Yes, I'll call a messenger at once. But I doubt even then that we'll be in time," said the Senator.

The telegram was sent, but before a reply came they were able to use the telephone.

"Hullo, is this the Italian-American steamship Company?—all right—are three passengers, two men and a boy, booked on the *Southern Star* as Jenkins and Thompson,—they are,—good, this is Senator Rivers talking, from Washington,—those men are criminals,—they have robbed the

government of valuable documents—summon the police and have them arrested and held—I'll take full responsibility—WHAT!—The *Southern Star* sailed two hours ago!"

The senator dropped the receiver from his hand in his disappointment.

"Too late! The code is lost to the United States for good, and those rascals have escaped!"

But Jack suddenly sprang forward. His cheeks were aflame with excitement.

"Senator," he cried. "There is still a chance."

"I fail to see it," said Mr. Rivers.

"Get the line on the wire again, sir, and find out if the *Southern Star* has a wireless."

"But what—Jove, boy! I see your plan now."

Eagerly the Senator snatched up the receiver again. Before long connection was again established.

"The *Southern Star* has a wireless," he exclaimed. "Her call is S. X. A., and now for your plan, my boy."

"Show me to your wireless room, will you, Ned?" said Jack, subduing the excitement in his voice with a struggle.

"Oh, Jack, I see what you're going to do now," cried Ned. "Come on. We don't want to lose a minute."

The boys dashed up the stairs three at a time. The Senator followed at a more discreet pace. They entered the wireless room with a bang and a shout.

Jack fairly flung himself at the key and began pounding out the *Southern Star's* call. In reality it was only ten minutes, but to those in that room it seemed hours before he got a reply. When he did, he summoned the captain through the operator.

"Have I got authority to use your name, Senator?" asked the boy while he waited for the announcement that the captain was in the wireless room.

"You have authority to use the name of the

most powerful institution in the world, my boy, the United States Government," said the Senator solemnly. Then, as if he had suddenly thought of something, he hurriedly left the room. Downstairs he once more applied himself to the telephone, but this time he talked to the Secretary of the Navy.

Fifteen minutes after Jack had spoken to the Captain of the *Southern Star* that craft was anchored in the Chesapeake River waiting the arrival of a gunboat hastily detailed by government wireless to proceed at once up that river and take three prisoners off the *Southern Star.* This latter order was the result of Senator Rivers' call to the Navy Department.

Jack's happy task was then to break the good news to Captain Simms, which he lost no time in doing, and the captain's deep gratitude, which was none the less because he expressed it in few words, may be imagined.

"I declare," he said, "you boys have been my good angels all through. You have helped me as if your own interests had been at stake. I don't know how to thank you."

The code was yielded up by Judson without a struggle, which procured him some leniency later on. But both he and Jarrow met with heavy punishment for their misdeeds. Donald was allowed to go free on account of his youth and the government's disability to prove that he had actually anything to do with the theft of the code. After the news of his arrest spread, the long threatened disaster to Judson's company happened and it went into bankruptcy. Donald, the pampered and selfish, had to go to work for a living. The boys heard that he had gone west. They were destined to meet him again, however, as they were Thurman.

One of Jack's proudest possessions is a framed letter from the Secretary of the Navy thanking

him for his great aid and that of his friends in the matter of the Navy Code, but he values the friendship of Captain Simms as highly. Not long after the successful tests of the detector, there was a joyous gathering on board the old *Venus,* to which queer home Uncle Toby had returned. All our friends were there and Jack was able to announce a joyous surprise. He had been able to secure, through Captain Simms' influence, the command of a fine new sailing ship for Captain Dennis. She was a full-rigged bark, plying between New York and Mediterranean ports.

Tears stood in the veteran captain's eyes, as he thanked Jack, and Helen cried openly.

"Oh, Jack, I—I'd like to hug you!" she exclaimed, whereupon everybody laughed, and the emotional strain was over.

After a while, Captain Dennis began to tell of some of his adventures. Not only had he gone through many experiences on the sea, but also

on land, and especially during the great Civil War.

"One time," said Captain Dennis, "while on a foraging expedition, our men were surprised, and before I knew what had happened I was a prisoner. I was taken to an old building and put in the upper story of it.

"Of course, I wanted to escape. So, after a while, I began to try my luck with the rope tied around my wrists. To my joy I found that I could move them. Half an hour later my wrists were free.

"I peered out of the window. It was a very dark night, and the guard set around the building was close and vigilant. I felt that my chances to escape were very small.

"Still, I determined to try. After listening many hours, I thought I learned the exact position of the sentries. The spaces between them were very short, but it would be quite possible, I thought, to pass by them noiselessly and with-

out being perceived. I may as well state that the watch would have been even more strict had not the Confederates regarded the struggle as virtually at an end, and were, therefore, less careful as to their prisoners than they would otherwise have been.

"I prepared for escape by tearing up the sheet on the bed, and knotting the strips into a rope. I opened the window, threw out this rope, and slipped down to the ground. So far I was safe.

"It was dark and foggy, and very difficult to see two feet in advance. I soon found that my observations as to the places of the sentries had been useless. Still, in the darkness and thickness of the night, I thought that the chance of detection was small.

"Creeping quietly and noiselessly along, I could hear the constant challenges of the sentries around me. These, excited by the unusual darkness of the night, were unusually vigilant.

"I approached until I was within a few yards

of the line, and the voices of the men as they challenged enabled me to ascertain exactly the position of the sentries on the right and left of me. Passing between these, I could see neither, although they were but a few paces on either hand. Suddenly I fell into a stream running across my path.

"Of course, in the darkness I had not observed it. At the sound of my falling there was an instant challenge. Then a shot was fired!"

"Oh! How thrilling!" exclaimed Helen.

Jack and Ned laughed.

"Well," resumed Captain Dennis, "I struggled across the stream, and clambered out on the opposite side. As I did so, a number of muskets were fired in my direction by soldiers who had rushed up to the point of alarm. I felt a sharp, twitching pain in my shoulder, and I knew that I had been hit. But fortunately the other shots fired whizzed harmlessly by. At top speed I ran forward.

"I was safe from pursuit, for in the darkness it would have been absolutely impossible to follow me. So, in a few moments, I ceased running. What was the use of taking chances? All was quiet behind me, but I could no longer tell in what direction I was advancing.

"So long as I heard the shouts of the sentries, though the sounds seemed far off, I continued my way; and then, all guidance being lost, I lay down under a hedge and waited for morning."

"Oh, dear!" Helen cried sympathetically, "did you have to sleep in that cold, moist night?"

"Quite so," replied Captain Dennis, smiling good-humoredly; "and in the morning it was still foggy. After wandering aimlessly about for some time I at last succeeded in striking a road. I decided to take a westerly course.

"My shoulder was stiff and somewhat swollen. But the bullet had passed through its fleshy part, missing the bone; and although it cost much pain I was able, by wrapping my arm tightly to

my body, to proceed. More than once I had to withdraw from the road into the fields or bushes when I heard a straggling number of Confederates coming along.

"I came upon a house, and although I was hungry and tired, I was cautious. Instead of going to the door I made for the window. But I had my trouble for nothing. I looked in and saw a number of Confederate soldiers there, and knew that there was no safety for me. To add to my dismay, one of the soldiers happened to cast his eyes up as I glanced in the room and he at once gave a shout of warning.

"Instantly the others sprang to their feet and started out to pursue me. I fled down the road. A few shots were fired, but fortunately I was not hit again.

"At last I came to a small village. I wondered why I had not reached my camp. But you must remember that I was attached to a small number of men only, and that we always were

many miles ahead or in the rear of the army, as occasion called for.

"The village was deserted, for it was late at night again. I made myself comfortable in a sort of stable warehouse, climbing over a number of bales of cotton, and laid myself down next to the wall, secure from casual observation.

"When I awoke the next morning, I nearly uttered a cry of pain a sudden movement had given to my arm. I, however, suppressed it, and it was well that I did so, for I suddenly heard voices right near me. Darkies were moving bales of cotton but, being well back, I had little fear of being discovered.

"The hours passed wearily. I was parched and feverish from pain of my wound. Yet I was afraid to move. So I sometimes dozed off into snatches of fitful sleep. Perhaps I moaned, or I was accidentally discovered. At all events, when I awoke a mammy was bending over me, her voice fully of pity. And—well, to make a

long story short, I had blundered again, for the village was being occupied by the Federals, and the cotton the darkies had been taking away was going North. There is no need to add that I was well fed and well taken care of."

Captain Dennis paused, and thoughtfully smoked his pipe. His little audience sat very quietly, their eager faces and shining eyes plainly showing their rapt interest in the modestly told story.

"Well, well," said Captain Dennis, at last breaking the silence, "some day you, Jack and you Ned will be able to tell very many far more thrilling stories."

"Yes" replied Jack, "but none of them will be about so great a cause."

"You are right, Jack," Captain Dennis said fervently; "it was a good cause. But come, you are tired, so let us say 'good night,' my friends."

A half hour later Jack and Ned were fast asleep, dreaming of those stirring times when the

immortal Abraham Lincoln was President of this glorious nation.

* * * * * * *

The next week the *Columbia* sailed again. As she passed out of New York harbor, and past Sandy Hook, the passengers crowded to the rail to look at a beautiful sea picture.

The sun was setting, and the radiance turned to gold the white sails of a beautiful bark outward bound. As she heeled over on the starboard tack, it was evident that she would pass close to the steamer. From the wireless room Jack Ready and Billy Raynor watched the pretty sight with more interest, perhaps—certainly it was so in Jack's case—than anyone else on board.

"It's the *Silver Star,* Jack, Captain Dennis's ship," said Billy.

Jack nodded.

"I know it," he answered. "She sailed this morning. I've been on the lookout for her all the way down the bay."

There was silence between the two chums. The *Silver Star,* gliding swiftly through the water, came steadily on. As the steamer passed her, she was quite close, looking like a beautiful toy from the towering decks of the *Columbia.*

"Look!" exclaimed Billy, half in a whisper, as her ensign fluttered down in salute and then climbed upward to the peak again. A booming roar from the *Columbia's* siren acknowledged the compliment.

But Jack had no eyes for this. His gaze was fixed on the stern deck of the *Silver Star,* where, by her steering-wheel, gripped by two stalwart seamen, stood an upright old man, with glasses bent on the *Columbia.* A graceful girl was at his side. Jack saw her wave, and was waving frantically back, when there came an insistent summons from the wireless room.

When he came out on deck again twilight had fallen, but far back on the horizon was a tiny blur—the *Silver Star.* As Jack gazed back at

her, she vanished below the horizon as suddenly as an extinguished spark in a piece of tinder.

"Good-night," breathed Jack, and he stood for a long time motionless, leaning on the rail.

And here, for the time being, we, too, will say good-by to our young friends, to meet them all again in the next volume devoted to their doings, which will be called "The Ocean Wireless Boys on the Pacific."

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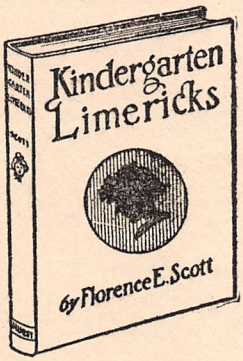

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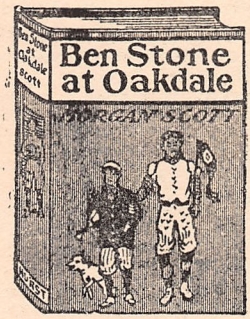

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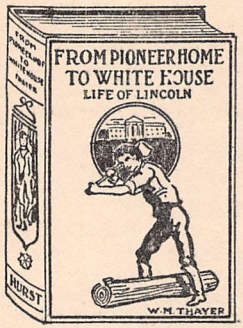

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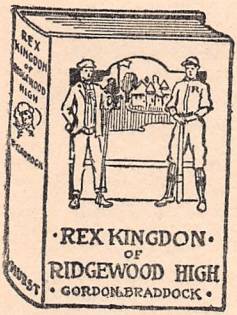

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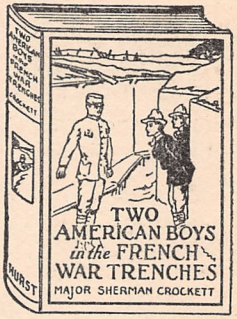

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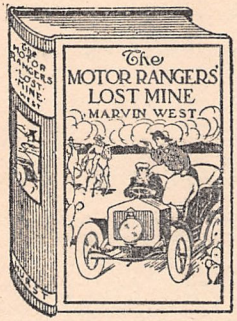

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